

HAYFEVER OR COVID-19?

Warm weather, a bit of wind and pollen – perfect ingredients for the hayfever season! But is it hayfever or COVID-19? How can you tell the difference?

What is Hayfever?

- Hayfever is an allergic reaction commonly triggered by grass seed, pollen, mould or dust mites.
- At least one in five people suffers hayfever. Animals – cats and dogs – can get it too.

What are the Symptoms of Hayfever?

- The most common symptoms of hayfever are tiredness, sneezing, itchy red eyes which may also be watery and throat and nasal congestion or a runny nose. People often get severe headaches.
- The less common symptoms of hayfever may include shortness of breath and loss of smell and taste.

Aren't these Symptoms Similar to COVID-19?

- Yes! – the most common symptoms of COVID-19 are dry cough, tiredness, sore throat and fever but the other symptoms include conjunctivitis (or red eyes), headache, shortness of breath, congested or runny nose and loss of smell and/or taste.

So How Can You Tell if You Have COVID-19 or Just Hayfever?

- The hayfever symptoms that aren't common to COVID-19 are itchy throat and eyes, sneezing (with no other cold or flu symptoms) and red watery eyes but the only sure way it isn't COVID-19 is with a COVID test.

So If I'm Pretty Sure it's Just Hayfever, I Don't Need a COVID Test?

- If you get hayfever at this time each year and your symptoms are the same as usual, you can be pretty sure you have hayfever, not COVID-19.
- If you are experiencing different symptoms to your usual hayfever, the symptoms are getting worse or there is any uncertainty about whether it is hayfever, get tested.
- If you working while you have hayfever, your employer may ask you to get tested.

Once I'm Certain it's Hayfever, What Can be Done to Ease Symptoms at Home?

- Clean your house – regularly wipe down places allergens can accumulate like the top of doorways, fan blades and screens. Clean pet's bedding and vacuum up pet hair.
- Minimise exposure to allergens – the fact we have to wear masks at the moment will help but also shower after being outside to reduce pollen or grass seed on skin and stay inside on windy days with the doors and windows shut.
- Ease nasal congestion with an old style inhalations – over a bowl with a towel over the head - using either just steam or eucalyptus oil. While at work, you can do it with just a mug or boiling water cupping your hands around the lip and breathing the steam.
- Make a decongestant – mix a little eucalyptus oil with some light oil such as jojoba and spreading it where you can smell it (such as under your nose) or on a handkerchief. There are also some commercially available essential oil preparations specifically aimed at this!
- Try acupressure to ease runny nose – on the cheek beside the end of the nose, press points press the area right beside the nostrils. The points will be tender so press gently!
- Ease itchy eyes – wash or splash water around your eyes or wash the eyes in a saline eye bath.
- Acupuncture has some great treatments to relieve the symptoms of hayfever – but the practitioner may require you to have a COVID test if they haven't treated your hayfever before.