

#### HAY FEVER

Dr Sara talks about pollen allergies and offers some self-help remedies.

#### CHARITY NEWS

We have news on two of our recent grant recipients; **Connemara Therapeutic Riding** and **FirstLight**.



#### Dr Sara Kayat

Every issue, Dr Sara Kayat advises on topical health matters and provides relevant tips.



# Hay Fever

Dr Sara Kayat

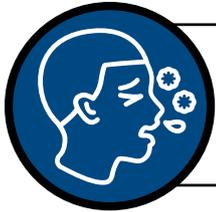


Whilst many of us are starting to enjoy the outdoor fun that summer brings, for 26 percent of adults and 10-15 percent of children that suffer with hay fever, sadly that is often a distant dream. Allergic rhinitis, also known as hay fever, is an allergy to pollen.

The hay fever season can begin as early as March and end in September, but everyone may suffer at different times depending on which pollen(s) you are allergic to. The majority of people are allergic to grass pollen, which is at its most prevalent from mid May to July. Other hay fever allergies include tree pollen, usually from late March to Mid-May, and weed pollen from the end of June to September.

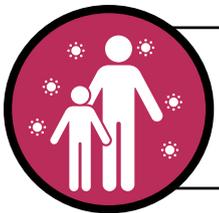


# Hay Fever



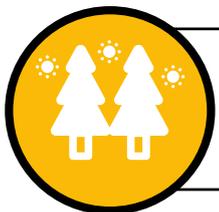
## Symptoms

The most common symptoms include a runny or congested nose, sneezing, tickly throat, headaches and itchy eyes. Whilst we consider hay fever to be a fairly benign condition, it can have detrimental effects on your quality of life, including reduced work productivity, reluctance to socialise, and poor sleep patterns. In children, the effects have been demonstrated in the results from the Education for Health, revealing that hay fever sufferers are 40 percent more likely to drop a grade from their mock exams in January to summer.



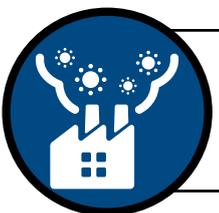
## Who is affected the most

It can affect anyone at any age, but most commonly begins in adolescence/young adulthood, and it seems the number of sufferers are on the rise. We do not know why some people are more susceptible than others, but it is likely that genetics plays a significant role.



## Measures

There is no cure for hay fever, but there are many self-help measures one can take to alleviate the symptoms. Simple considerations, like avoiding going out in the morning and the evening when pollen counts are at their highest, and ensuring windows and doors to the house remain closed to avoid pollen entering the home, can all help. As can regularly vacuuming and dusting surfaces with a damp cloth to pick up any pollen that has entered the house, and you can even invest in an air purifier to filter out the pollen particles.



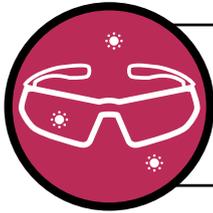
## Indoors prevention

Having been outdoors, pollen can remain on your clothes, so ensure that you change out of and wash your clothes when you enter the house and take a shower. Though avoid drying the laundry outdoors. If you have pets and it is possible to keep them indoors during the high pollen days, then do so, but if not, when they come back in the house also try stroking them with a damp cloth to prevent them spreading the pollen around the house.



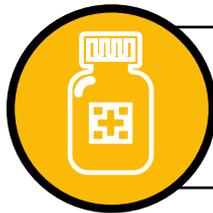
# Health

## Hay Fever



### Protect yourself

To prevent the pollen irritating your eyes and nose, wear wraparound sunglasses outdoors, and put petroleum jelly around your nostrils to trap it before it is able to enter your nasal passages.



### Medications

There are also plenty of medications that can help relieve the symptoms of hay fever. Over the counter oral antihistamines are the primary treatment, but often monotherapy will not suffice, and sufferers may require a combination of steroid nasal sprays, antihistamine nasal sprays, and anti-inflammatory or antihistamine eye drops to help manage their symptoms. It can take up to 2-3 days for antihistamines to reach their full treatment potential, so take them daily throughout the hay fever season to receive the full benefits.

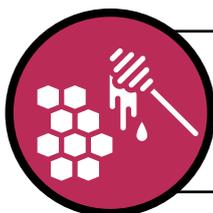
Furthermore, nasal steroids can even take up to 2-3 weeks to reach their therapeutic optimum so ideally, one should start them a few weeks before the hay fever symptoms even begin.

This requires a little forward planning, and the Met Office provides a five-day pollen forecast for the UK, but there are also apps that can give longer forecasts.



### Treatment

For those with particularly resistant hay fever, immunotherapy may be the best next step. This form of treatment allows you to slowly build up your immunity to pollen by injecting or ingesting a small amount of the pollen that you are allergic to. It is a hospital based treatment and requires several sessions, so it needs to be started 3 months prior to the start of hay fever season.



### Alternatives

There are a number of claimed alternative therapies available, including the use of local honey and bee pollen. Whilst the evidence to support these are limited, the theory is that it may work in a similar way to immunotherapy, by exposing you to your allergen in the hope you would slowly build an immunity.

Whilst it may sound harmless and worth a try, there is some concern that if you have a particularly severe hay fever allergy, that exposing yourself to such significant concentration of pollen as found in bee pollen could trigger off anaphylaxis.

# HSF health plan is here for you

Needing access to remote health and wellbeing advice? HSF health plan's virtual support system, HSF Assist, has recently increased the hours and availability of the virtual doctor and prescriptions service. Other benefits available include counselling/emotional wellbeing support, legal advice and debt management. Register and login to [mypolicy.hsf.eu.com](http://mypolicy.hsf.eu.com) to gain access to these benefits which are included in all HSF health plans, or visit [hsfassist.ie](http://hsfassist.ie) for more information on offering this service to your workforce.



## Meet the Doctor

### Dr Sara Kayat

Each month, Dr Sara Kayat provides us with her latest health and wellbeing tips. Health Matters editions are launched along with an accompanying video, which you can find on the HSF health plan YouTube channel.

Dr Sara is This Morning's resident GP on ITV, regularly offering her expertise on their weekly "Second Opinion" feature.

She is a practising NHS GP at Gray's Inn Medical Practice, and is an advocate of maintaining good mental health.



Sara regularly practices mindfulness and yoga herself, and has a keen interest in preventative medicine.



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# Charity News

Profits from HSF health plan are used by our charity, The Hospital Saturday Fund to provide assistance for registered health charities, hospices, medical organisations and individuals with a medical condition or disability. Simply by belonging to HSF health plan, you are helping others.

We report on two recent grant recipients; Connemara Therapeutic Riding and FirstLight.

## Connemara Therapeutic Riding

**Connemara Therapeutic Riding (CTR) is a Community Group founded with support from various agencies and businesses in the Connemara area and beyond. The Charity provides therapeutic interventions for intellectually and physically disabled children and adults, who would otherwise have an 80 mile round trip to access any specialist therapies and services.**

### About the charity

CTR believes in an all-inclusive, family experience approach. They offer Sibling Sessions, which provides much needed respite for parents/carers. All leaders and side walkers are volunteers that are trained by qualified coaches. The therapy ponies are all Registered Connemara Ponies, bred, reared and trained in Connemara. They have proven to be the perfect therapy pony as they are calm and placid, seeming to innately understand what is required of them.



Above shows two volunteers of Connemara Therapeutic Riding introducing Paul Jackson (HSF Group CEO) to one of the therapy ponies.

### Exciting developments

The riding school had to move last year. Although this was very beneficial for their clients, the new location has no amenities such as a wheelchair accessible toilet.

CTR have recently been receiving requests to help schools with special needs children from other areas of

Galway, so the new facilities are even more important than before.

We were therefore delighted to support Connemara Therapeutic Riding with a grant for **€13,500**, to use towards the cost of new comfort facilities for their riders with disabilities.

To find out more information, please visit their website on <https://www.connemaratherapeuticriding.com/>



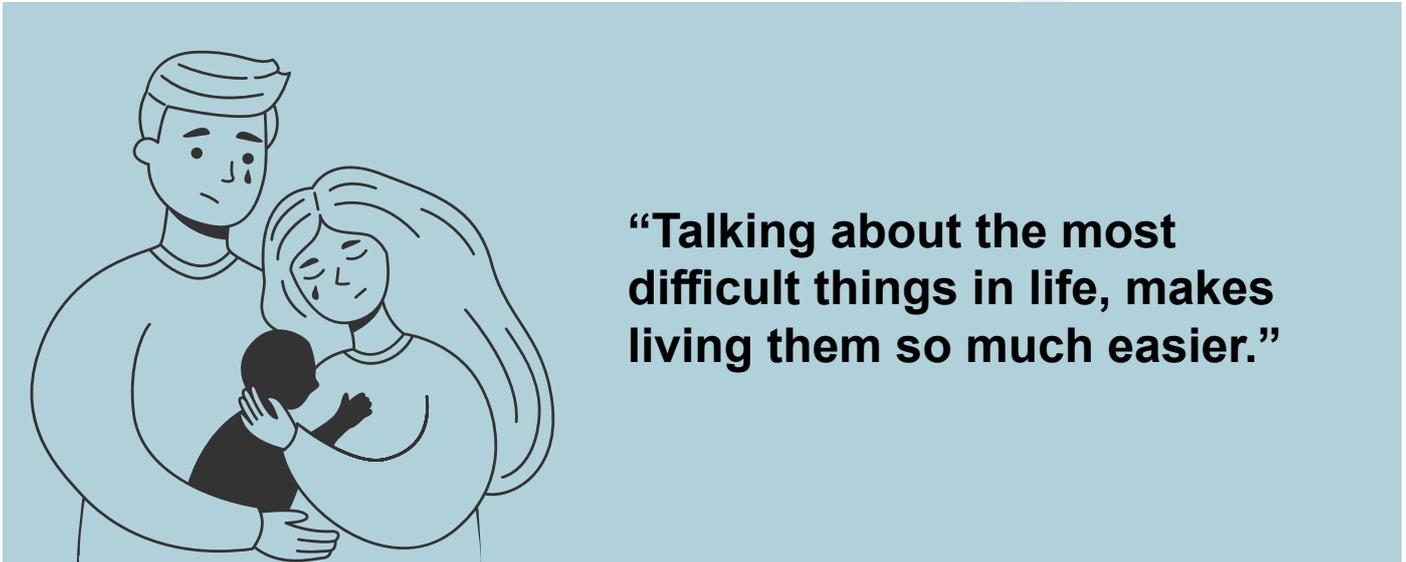
Paul Jackson (HSF Group CEO) presenting a check of **€13,500** to Karen Mannion, CEO of Forum Connemara and Bartley Conroy, Manager of Connemara Therapeutic Riding, in front of the CTR community.

# Charity News



The Hospital  
Saturday Fund

## FirstLight



**“Talking about the most difficult things in life, makes living them so much easier.”**

**FirstLight (originally Irish Sudden Infant Death Association) was established in 1976 by parents who had experienced the sudden, inexplicable death of their children. Their purpose was to promote research into sudden infant death (SIDS) and provide support for families impacted by it.**

They have experienced a 300 percent growth over 4 years, in the demand for their services. The increase is not necessarily reflective of an increase in sudden child mortality in Ireland, but a genuine national need for FirstLight's services and increased awareness of these services, amongst the frontline hospital and community-based professionals referring suddenly bereaved families to FirstLight for support.

Firstlight's services include: crisis intervention following the sudden death of a child up to 18 years, a home visit to the bereaved family (generally within a fortnight of the bereavement), couple and one-to-one counselling, play therapy and one-to-one counselling for siblings, closed therapeutic programmes for groups of parents, family support bereavement days and remembrance events.

### **Supporting the community**

All services are provided free of charge. Families who lose a child, suddenly face unexpected financial costs. FirstLight does not want insufficient financial resources to be a barrier to families desperately in need of its services.

They have continued to provide their services during the Covid-19 pandemic and adapted the delivery to comply with social

distancing requirements.

### **Development on the horizon**

In light of the Covid-19 consequences, there is now the requirement to further develop FirstLight's Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) services and the potential to diversify their funding sources, by charging, where appropriate, for these services.

The Hospital Saturday Fund granted Firstlight **€3,000** towards the development and marketing of the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Service. Funds generated through CISD services provision will be invested in the provision of free services to suddenly bereaved families.

To find out more about the charity, please visit their website on <https://firstlight.ie/>



## HSF health plan

Employee benefits from a charitable group



### Helping the community

Just by being a policyholder, you are making a contribution to the important work of our charity, **The Hospital Saturday Fund**. This is not something that usually happens when an insurance policy is taken out!



### Helping employees

With **HSF health plan**, your employees can receive hassle free, affordable health cover for themselves and their families. Our plans also include access to **HSF Assist**<sup>®</sup>, our advice and support helpline service.



## HSF health plan benefits



Dental



Optical



Hospital



Practitioner



GP consult /  
prescription



Personal  
accident



HSF  
Assist



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