

Allergic Rhinitis

1. What is Allergic Rhinitis? (Hayfever)

"Rhinitis" is a descriptive term meaning "inflammation of the nose." When allergy is the cause, the body's defenses (the immune system) are over-reacting to microscopic airborne particles called allergens. The symptoms that results are similar to symptoms caused by airway irritants and infections...sneezing, runny nose, stuffy nose, itchy, red, and watery eyes.

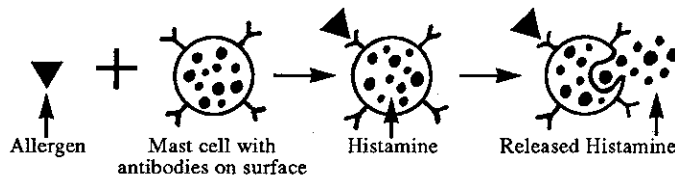


2. What about Itchy Eyes?

Allergic conjunctivitis often bothers people with nasal allergies. Rubbing the eyes will only aggravate symptoms. Artificial tears will lubricate, cleanse, and may soothe inflamed eyes, but antihistamine eye drops will help the itching. Your doctor may need to prescribe something stronger.

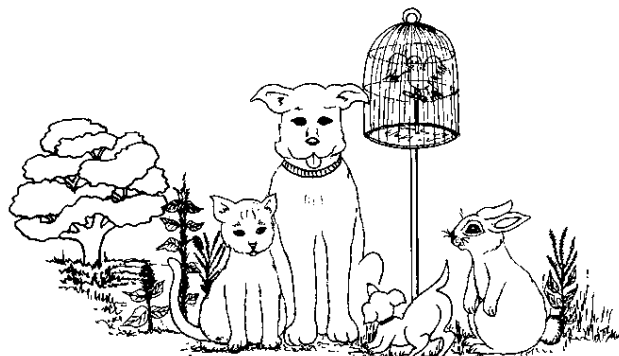
3. What Happens During an Allergic Reaction?

Microscopic particles (allergens) are inhaled into the nose and bind to allergic antibodies that are attached to the surface of mast cells. Mast cells contain histamine, which, when released into the nasal tissue, causes the characteristic symptoms of allergic rhinitis.



4. What Are Allergy Triggers?

Common triggers of allergy symptoms include pollen from trees, grasses, and weeds, mold spores, dust mites, and animal dander. Allergy Skin Testing is done to detect allergic sensitivity to these allergens. Some people are allergic to foods and stinging insect venoms, but these allergens don't usually cause nasal symptoms.



5. What Can I Do To Prevent Allergies?

Common sense tells us that Avoidance is the best way to reduce or even eliminate symptoms. Keeping a dust-free home and pets outdoors (always!) is a great start! Molds should also be eliminated. Of course, pollens are more difficult to avoid. Medications and allergy injections may be helpful when allergens cannot be fully avoided.

6. What Type of Allergy Medicines may I need?

Several types of allergy medicines are available:

- **Antihistamines** are helpful to control itching, sneezing, and runny nose.
- **Decongestants** are useful to treat stuffiness. Antihistamines and decongestants are often combined to treat all of the nasal allergy symptoms.
- **Nasal steroid** sprays work locally in the nose to decrease the inflammation that the allergic reaction has caused.
- **Eye Drops** may help with irritation, redness and swelling. If you wear contact lenses, use eye drops 15 minutes prior to putting in your contacts.



7. Should I Be on Allergy Injections, "Shots"?

Patients treated with Allergy shots are expected to have a marked decrease in allergy symptoms as well as a marked decrease in the use of allergy medication. You may want to consider injections if:

- You have moderate to severe allergies
- You have sinus problems or asthma due to allergies
- You have severe cat or dog allergies and can't always avoid them
- You don't respond to allergy medications or would like to avoid a lifetime of medications
- You have allergies to stinging insects (bees, wasps, etc.)

Ask your doctor if it's right for you!