

## Allergic rhinitis (seasonal allergies)



Rhinitis refers to inflammation of the nasal passages. This inflammation can cause a variety of annoying symptoms, including sneezing, itching, nasal congestion, runny nose, and postnasal drip (the sensation that mucus is draining from the sinuses down the back of the throat).

Brief episodes of rhinitis are usually caused by respiratory tract infections with viruses (eg, the common cold). Chronic rhinitis is usually caused by allergies, but it can also occur from overuse of certain drugs, some medical conditions, and other unidentifiable factors.

For many people, rhinitis is a lifelong condition that waxes and wanes over time. Fortunately, the symptoms of rhinitis can usually be controlled with a combination of environmental measures, medications, and immunotherapy.

The diagnosis of allergic rhinitis is based upon physical examination and the symptoms described above. Medical tests can confirm the diagnosis and identify the offending allergens.

It is often possible to identify the allergens and other triggers that provoke allergic rhinitis by recalling the factors that precede symptoms, noting the time at which symptoms begin and identifying potential allergens in the home, work, and school environments.

Skin tests may be useful for people whose symptoms are not well-controlled with medications or in whom the offending allergen is not obvious. For those allergens not available for skin testing, your blood may be drawn and sent to a laboratory for testing. Make sure any blood testing you receive is performed in a lab accredited by organizations such as the College of American Pathologists. Pathology Consultants, Inc. pathologists are only affiliated with CAP accredited laboratories.

The treatment of allergic rhinitis includes reducing exposure to allergens and other triggers in combination with medication therapy. In most people, these measures effectively control the symptoms. Avoidance of allergens can reduce exposure to triggers that provoke allergic rhinitis.

Several different classes of drugs counter the inflammation that causes symptoms of allergic rhinitis. The best treatment(s) will depend on symptoms and personal preferences. Rinsing the nose with a salt water (saline) solution is called "nasal irrigation" or "nasal lavage." Nasal glucocorticoids (steroids) delivered by a nasal spray are the first-line treatment for the symptoms of allergic rhinitis. Antihistamines relieve the itching, sneezing, and runny nose of allergic rhinitis, but they do not relieve nasal congestion. Combined treatment with nasal steroids or decongestants may provide greater symptom relief than use of either alone. Allergy shots, also known as "allergen immunotherapy," are injections given to reduce sensitivity to allergens. Allergy shots are only available for common allergens, including pollens, cat and dog dander, dust mites, and molds. Immunotherapy can help many people with allergic rhinitis. In children, immunotherapy can help prevent the development of allergic asthma later in life. However, immunotherapy is relatively time consuming and is often reserved for people who have a poor response to medication or want to minimize the number of medications they need long term.

Your healthcare provider is the best source of information for questions and concerns related to your allergic rhinitis.

References:

<http://www.uptodate.com/contents/allergic-rhinitis-seasonal-allergies-beyond-the-basics>