



Nasal Allergies

Nothing To Sniff At



PRIMED
Patient Education Center

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T

here are 3 types of nasal allergies, which doctors call *rhinitis*:

Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis

- If your symptoms come and go as various plants bloom, you have **seasonal allergic rhinitis**. If your symptoms occur in the spring, you're probably allergic to tree pollen; in the summer, grass and weed pollens are the likely culprits; in the late summer and fall, ragweed is the probable cause.

Perennial Allergic Rhinitis

- If your symptoms occur year-round, you have **perennial allergic rhinitis** and you're probably allergic to indoor allergens such as dust mites, molds, or animal dander.

Non-Allergic Rhinitis

- If your symptoms are caused by medication, exposure to cold air, strong smells or fumes, eating, or exercise, you have **non-allergic rhinitis**.

Between 20% and 40% of patients with allergic rhinitis also have asthma. Some have nasal polyps, a deviated nasal septum, sinusitis, or eczema.

Symptoms

- A stuffy, runny nose
- Sneezing
- A postnasal drip that can trigger coughing
- An itchy or sore throat
- Itchy, burning, watery or bloodshot eyes

Diagnosis

Most people can diagnose the problem themselves by spotting typical symptoms. If needed,

an ear, nose and throat specialist can check for polyps and other nasal abnormalities.

If you have to pinpoint your allergies, you may get skin tests and a RAST blood test.



Three Treatment Plans:

1 Avoid Triggers

For seasonal rhinitis, take precautions when pollen counts are high:

- **Limit outdoor activities.** If you have to do yard work, wear an N95 mask. Shower, wash your hair, and change your clothes afterwards.
- **Keep your windows and doors closed** as much as possible.
- **Use air conditioners instead of fans**, which bring in outside air. Drive with the windows closed and air conditioner on.



For year-round rhinitis:

- **Put pillows, box springs, and mattresses in sealed plastic covers** to keep out dust mites. Wash bedding in hot water (above 120°F) to kill dust mites.

- **If you must have a dog or cat, have it bathed weekly** and try to keep it off furniture and out of the bedroom.

- **Remove carpeting from your bedroom.**

- **Use a dehumidifier** to keep humidity below 40%.

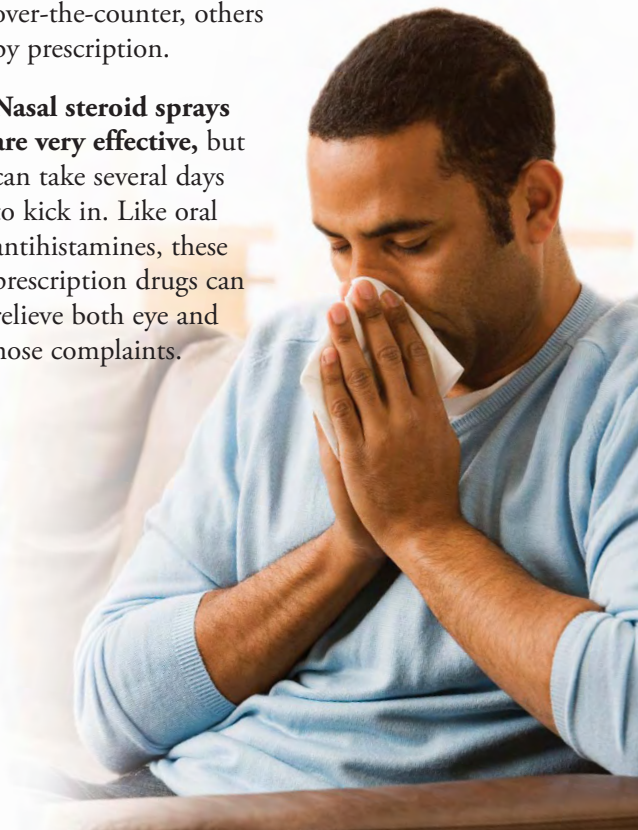


2 Use Medication

You have many choices; ask your doctor about the pros and cons of each.

Antihistamine tablets and nasal sprays are very helpful. Some are available over-the-counter, others by prescription.

Nasal steroid sprays are very effective, but can take several days to kick in. Like oral antihistamines, these prescription drugs can relieve both eye and nose complaints.



Leukotriene blockers are oral prescription drugs that can relieve most allergic rhinitis symptoms.

Decongestants are available without prescription as tablets or nasal sprays. They should not be your first choice, but can be combined with a first-line drug for temporary use. Don't use a decongestant nasal spray for more than a few days.

Other medications include an anticholinergic nasal spray that's good for a running nose, and various eye drops.



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3 Consider Immunotherapy

“Allergy shots” can help, but most doctors reserve them for patients who don't respond well to medication.



For more information about nasal allergies, visit these Web sites:



American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology

www.aaaai.org
414.272.6071



Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

www.aafa.org
1.800.7.ASTHMA
(1.800.727.8462)



American College of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology

www.acaai.org
847.427.1200



National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

www.niaid.nih.gov
1.866.284.4107



To learn more about nasal allergies, visit the **Pri-Med Patient Education Center** at www.patientedu.org/allergies.

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