

NON-ALLERGIC RHINITIS

You have been diagnosed as having *non-allergic rhinitis*, which is sometimes also called *vasomotor rhinitis*. This means that your allergy skin tests were negative, or you had a few positive skin tests that do not fully explain your symptoms. It is often a surprise to patients that they do not have allergies, because often they have had allergy-like symptoms for many years. Actually the symptoms of allergic rhinitis (AR) and non-allergic rhinitis overlap quite a bit: patients with both conditions may have nasal congestion (stiffness), drip and drainage, sinus headaches and frequent sinus infections.

We often say that having NAR rather than AR is both good news and bad news. The good news is that the NAR patients do not have to close windows on beautiful spring and fall days, get rid of their pets, or take allergy shots. The bad news is that closing windows, getting rid of pets and allergy shots will not help NAR patients.

The triggers for NAR are not the usual ones for AR (pollens, molds, mite, and animal danders). Triggers for NAR are generally irritants:

- Fragrances (perfumes, colognes, air fresheners such as Glade "plug-ins")
- Aerosols (hair sprays, cleaning products, etc.)
- Dusts (house dust, dry wall dust, dust from dirt roads or grass cutting)
- You are not allergic to these things; rather they irritate your inflamed non-allergic nose.
- Other triggers for NAR include "physical factors":
- Temperature changes (e.g., going from hot outdoor air into an air-conditioned room in the summer)
- Barometric pressure changes (e.g., falling barometric pressure before rains)
- Hot or cold or spicy food

Treatment of NAR, too, is different. Antihistamines (e.g., Zyrtec, Allegra, and Claritin) are important treatments for AR, but generally do not help people with NAR. The most commonly used treatments for NAR are:

- Nasal anti-inflammatory sprays
 - Nasal steroid sprays (e.g., Flonase, Rhinocort, Nasonex)
 - Astelin nasal spray
- Decongestants
- Mucolytics (guaifenesin)
- Atrovent (ipratropium) nasal spray (for very drippy noses)

Finally, although the official name of our specialty is "Allergy," we are happy to take care of your NAR. In fact, the allergist is probably the specialist best qualified to take care of this sometimes-difficult condition.

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Patient Education Center

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Hay Fever (Allergic Rhinitis)

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What Is It?

Hay fever, also known as seasonal allergic rhinitis, is an allergy-related inflammation of the nasal passages, throat, and eye membrane (conjunctiva), caused by sensitivity to airborne pollens and molds. These airborne pollens come from various species of trees, grasses, weeds and other plants whose pollens are carried by the wind rather than by insects. Because different types of pollen trigger symptoms in different people, each person's specific hay fever "season" is fairly predictable and is related to times when their allergy-triggering plant is in bloom. For example, for people who are allergic to tree pollens and who live in temperate North America, symptoms usually are worst from March through May, when trees are blossoming. June and July are peak months for people allergic to grasses, while people with ragweed allergies suffer the worst symptoms from mid-August through October. Since molds depend on damp, dark conditions, people who are allergic to molds tend to have the least predictable allergy season. They usually find that their symptoms are more related to warm, rainy weather. In the United States, this means summer and fall are peak times.

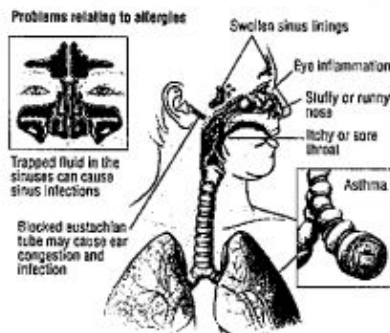
Hay fever and its sister ailment, perennial allergic rhinitis (a year-round sensitivity to animal dander, dust mites or cockroaches), are most common in people who have a family history of allergies or a personal history of allergy-related conditions, such as eczema and childhood asthma. Currently, about 20% of people in the United States suffer from either seasonal or perennial allergic rhinitis. Although seasonal allergic rhinitis can affect people in all age groups, its symptoms generally peak during childhood and adolescence.

Symptoms

Symptoms of hay fever usually begin before age 30. They typically include:

- Sneezing
- Itchy and runny nose
- Stuffy nose
- Red, itchy or watery eyes
- Itchy or sore throat

The congested nose can lead to mouth breathing, and the dripping mucus can cause persistent cough and sore throat. Because hay fever also causes swelling in the sinuses and near the opening of the Eustachian tube (passage that connects the throat to the middle ear), sufferers can develop additional symptoms of secondary sinus infections or ear infections.



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