

Allergy Season is Approaching

What is allergic rhinitis?

Allergic rhinitis, often called allergies or hay fever, occurs when your immune system overreacts to particles in the air that you breathe - you are allergic to them. Your immune system attacks the particles in your body, causing symptoms such as sneezing and a runny nose. The particles are called allergens, which simply means they can cause an allergic reaction. People with allergies usually have symptoms for many years. You may have symptoms often during the year, or just at certain times. You also may get other problems such as sinusitis and ear infections a result of your allergies. Over time, allergens may begin to affect you less, and your symptoms may not be as severe as they had been.

Common Allergens

You probably know that pollens from trees, grasses, and weeds cause allergic rhinitis. Many people have allergies to dust mites, animal dander, cockroaches, and mold as well. Things in the workplace, such as cereal grain, wood dust, chemicals, or lab animals, can also cause allergic rhinitis.

How is allergic rhinitis diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask about your symptoms and examine you. Knowing what symptoms you have, when you get them, and what makes them worse or better can help your doctor know whether you have allergies or another problem.

If you have severe symptoms, you may need to have allergy tests to find out what you are allergic to.

- Skin test: your doctor puts a small amount of an allergen into your skin to see if it causes an allergic reaction.
- Laboratory tests: that can find substances in your blood or other fluids that may mean you have allergic rhinitis.

How is it treated?

There is no cure for allergic rhinitis. **1)** One of the best things you can do is to avoid the things that cause your allergies. You may need to clean your house often to get rid of dust, animal dander, or molds. Or you may need to stay indoors when pollen counts are high. **2)** Unless you have another health problem, such as asthma, you may take over-the-counter medicines to treat your symptoms at home. **3)** If your allergies bother you a lot and you cannot avoid the things you are allergic to, you and your doctor can decide if you should get allergy shots (immunotherapy) to help control your symptoms. For allergy shots to work, you need to know what you are allergic to. Finding the treatment that works best for you may take a little time.

Symptoms

- Repeated sneezing, especially after you wake up in the morning.
- Runny nose and postnasal drip. The drainage from a runny nose caused by allergies is usually clear and thin. But it may become thicker and cloudy or yellowish if you get a nasal or sinus infection.
- Eyes are watery and itchy.
- Ears, nose, and throat are itchy.

Particles in air (allergens)



Allergic symptoms

- Watery eyes
- Runny nose
- Itchy throat



© Healthwise, Incorporated