



Allergic Rhinitis

Allergic rhinitis, means that the eyes, nose, pharynx and larynx are allergic to certain substances (allergens) leading to inflammatory response. Allergic rhinitis can be divided into two categories:

- Seasonal – e.g. allergic to pollen
- Perennial – e.g. allergic to dust, fungus or hair/fur

Symptoms

- Symptoms of the nose: sneezing, runny nose, blocked nose, itchy nose, a blunt sense of smell, nasal mucosa ulceration, a red hot nose, etc.
- Symptoms of the eye: red, itchy, watery eyes
- Other symptoms: other allergic symptoms e.g. eczema, asthma



Factors that Induce Allergic Rhinitis and Preventive Methods

- 1 Allergen stimulates nasal mucosa causing allergic reaction. Examples of allergens are:

- dust mite, pollen or fungus in your home
- hair/fur or skin scrapes of animals
- woollen clothes and down pillows

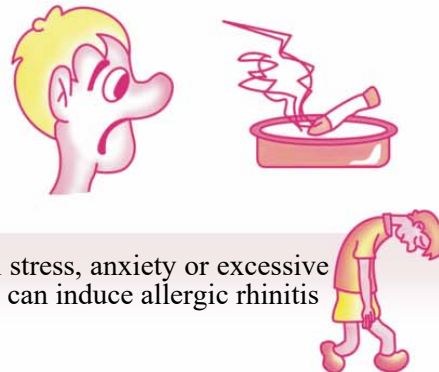


- 2 Chemicals such as cosmetics, paint, camphor and insecticides stimulate the nasal mucosa and exacerbate the symptoms



- 3 Certain food, e.g. seafood, alcoholic drinks, spicy food like chilli, pepper and curry can dilate the blood vessels in the nasal mucosa and exacerbate blocked nose

- 4 Air pollution or sudden weather change will induce or exacerbate the symptoms



- 5 Mental stress, anxiety or excessive fatigue can induce allergic rhinitis

- Avoid contact with allergens
- Keep a clean household environment and prevent accumulation of dust
- Prevent bathroom and kitchen walls or other dark damp corners getting mouldy. Keep the kitchen and bathroom dry and well ventilated. Anti-fungus or dehumidifying agent may be used
- Air-conditioner and heater can also become mouldy. Clean the appliance with a wet cloth regularly. Dust filter should be cleansed weekly
- When making the bed, lift the bedclothes gently to prevent dust from flying everywhere. Then wait for the dust to settle before going to bed. This can reduce the possibility of an allergic attack when you are sleeping
- Avoid growing flowering plants at home. In flowering seasons, avoid going to the parks

- Avoid the use of makeup, perfume, and shampoo, soap or skin lotion that contain strong scent
- Wash bedclothes and place them under the sun regularly to prevent them from getting mouldy. Do not put moth balls or camphor together with clothes
- Only repaint the walls when the affected person is not around. Wallpaper is an alternative
- Avoid using liquid or aerosol type of insecticide. Choose electrical or tablet type instead



- Avoid eating food that has caused allergic reaction before
- Taste a little bit first before enjoying a new type of food
- Avoid hot, spicy food and alcohol



- Keep your house well ventilated, e.g. use an air purifier, install an extractor fan in the kitchen
- Avoid staying in air-polluted places
- No smoking around the affected person
- During influenza season, avoid going to crowded places such as cinemas or restaurants
- Beware of sudden changes of temperature both indoor and outdoor, including:
 - Temperature of air-conditioned room should not be too low, maintain a room temperature of about 25°C
 - Always bring a jacket when going to air-conditioned places
 - Wear enough clothes when going out in the cold weather



- Get enough sleep
- Avoid excessive fatigue
- Relax and be cheerful

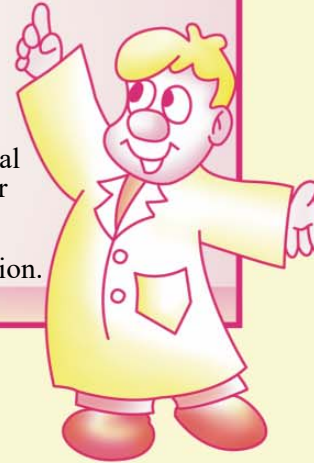


Management and Treatment for Allergic Rhinitis

There is no cure for allergic rhinitis. The main aim is to prevent attacks and ease the symptoms when they happen. Allergen avoidance, antihistamines and steroid nasal spray are considered as first-line treatment. Please consult general practitioner or family doctor and follow doctor's instruction for proper medication.

- Oral antihistamine can reduce nasal dripping, itchiness and sneezing. Older antihistamines may cause drowsiness. Newer antihistamines have fewer side effects. Antihistamines are also available as nasal sprays. The intranasal spray may be less acceptable to patients due to a bitter taste.
- Steroid nasal spray has anti-inflammatory effects. It is used at low dose in nasal area. If used properly, the side effects are limited.
- Nasal decongestant is for severe nasal blockage. It contracts the blood vessel in nasal mucosa, reduces swelling and thus relieves the nasal congestion. But if it is used for weeks, it may cause rebound after the drug is stopped. It is for short term use only.

If eyes itch, apply a cold, wet towel to the eyes, or use eye drops under doctor's instruction.



Advice to parents

- Allergic rhinitis is not a serious disease, but it can have significant impact on sleep, concentration, learning and daily function. It may also affect students' behaviour and development if it is not well controlled
- Caring and understanding from parents are very important
- Try to find out the allergen and avoid contact with substances that may cause allergic reaction such as dust mite, pollen, fungus, etc.
- Keep your home clean and ventilated
- Avoid growing flowering plants at home, nor keeping animals or birds
- Avoid hot, spicy food and alcohol
- Do not smoke
- Beware of sudden changes of temperature



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