

Allergic rhinitis

Department of Asthma and Allergy

Information for Patients

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What is rhinitis?

Rhinitis is inflammation of the inside of the nose (nasal passage). Symptoms can include a blocked nose, a runny nose or sneezing.

What is allergic rhinitis?

There are several different types of rhinitis, but rhinitis that is caused by something that triggers an allergy is known as allergic rhinitis e.g. exposure to allergens such as house dust mites, grass, insects, mould, food allergens and animals.

Allergic rhinitis is a common respiratory disease which can affect your quality of life and performance at work or school. Most people with this condition can also get inflammation of the lining of the eyes (known as allergic conjunctivitis); sometimes this can be more difficult than in the nose. Itchiness of the mouth and throat, as well as symptoms in the ear are also common. 40% of people with rhinitis also have asthma. It is important to treat asthma and rhinitis together as this has been shown to help improve asthma.

Treating allergic rhinitis

Treatment will depend on how bad your allergic rhinitis is. It should combine the following:

- Where possible avoid exposure to allergens that you know or suspect is triggering your rhinitis.
- Take medicine used to relieve symptoms of allergies (anti-histamine tablets).
- Use a steroid nasal spray.
- Use eye drops.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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In very severe cases where there is a single trigger such as grass pollen (hay fever), treatment to block the immune response to the allergen (known as immunotherapy) can be an option.

If you also have asthma it is very important to keep good control of this. Always take your preventer inhaler as prescribed and attend asthma check-ups.

How to use a steroid nasal spray

A steroid nasal spray can help reduce inflammation and relieve congestion in your nose. It can take up to 2 weeks for it to work. During hay fever season, you should begin treatment 2 weeks before symptoms are expected to start:

1. Blow your nose.
2. Shake the bottle and remove the lid.
3. Tilt your head forward slightly, so you can see the top of your toes.
4. Using the opposite hand to the nostril being treated (e.g. right hand to left nostril). Put the end of the spray bottle just inside the nostril, aiming away from the middle of your nose, pointing towards your ear.
5. Push down once to release a dose of the nasal spray.
6. **Do not sniff.** You should not taste the medicine.
7. Change hands and repeat the action in your other nostril.

Further information

- British Thoracic Society, British Guideline on the Management of Asthma - available from: <https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk/standards-of-care/guidelines/btssign-british-guideline-on-the-management-of-asthma/>
- NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/allergic-rhinitis/treatment/>

Contact details

For any non-urgent queries, contact the Asthma and Allergy Nurse on 0116 258 3557, Monday to Friday - 9am to 4.30pm, or contact your GP for advice.

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