

Reason of constant runny nose: Allergic rhinitis or rhinosinusitis, symptoms, and treatment

There are many causes of runny nose. Allergic rhinitis or rhinosinusitis is a very common problem. It is also called hay fever or nose allergy.

Types of allergic rhinitis:

1. Seasonal allergic rhinitis:

This happens primarily during one season like in spring or autumn and is related to pollens from grasses or trees.

2. Perennial allergic rhinitis:

This type of allergic rhinitis happens all the time and is usually due to exposure to allergens which are found inside the houses

Symptoms:

The symptoms of hay fever or allergic rhinitis depend on the type of rhinitis and how bad it is. The most common symptoms include

- Runny nose or watery nose
- Nasal congestion
- Frequent sneezing
- Postnasal drip
- Itchy eyes, watery eyes, red eyes
- Dry cough
- Sinus congestion and frequent headache or pain in the face
- Abnormal or reduced sense of smell

Causes of allergic rhinitis:

There are multiple allergens which can cause allergic rhinitis. The most common include

- Grass pollens
- Pollen from the flowers
- Tree pollens
- Mold/fungus
- Dust mite
- Pet (cat/dog/horse) dander
- Smog
- Cockroaches

It tends to happen more commonly in patients who have family history of allergies or hay fever.

People who have asthma are more likely at risk of developing allergic rhinitis too.

Diagnosis:

The diagnosis of allergic rhinitis is made based on typical symptoms and examination of nose and throat/eyes.

In most patients we do not need imaging but in some cases X-ray or CT scan of the sinuses/nose can be performed. Some blood tests are generally recommended. Total IgE level may be elevated. To confirm the diagnosis of what type of allergens is causing this problem, skin prick test may be needed.

Treatment:

The best treatment is complete avoidance to particular allergen which may not be possible in many cases.

If indoor pets are the reason for allergic rhinitis, moving them outdoor can be helpful. To remove any obvious mold from inside the house can be very helpful.

There are various treatments available for allergic rhinitis. Most common include oral antihistamines. But more important are nasal steroid sprays. Nasal antihistamine or decongestant drops for short duration can be used. If a patient has significant eye allergic symptoms, they may need topical antihistamine eye steroid and antihistamine drops. There are few other medications which can be used. Doing nasal washes can be helpful.

People who have got significant allergic rhinitis due to a specific allergen, may benefit from immunotherapy.

Patients who develop large nasal polyps or congestion/chronic sinusitis may require surgical intervention.

A patient with the chronic allergic asthma may have significant allergic rhinitis and it would be important to treat both conditions to get asthma under control effectively too.

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