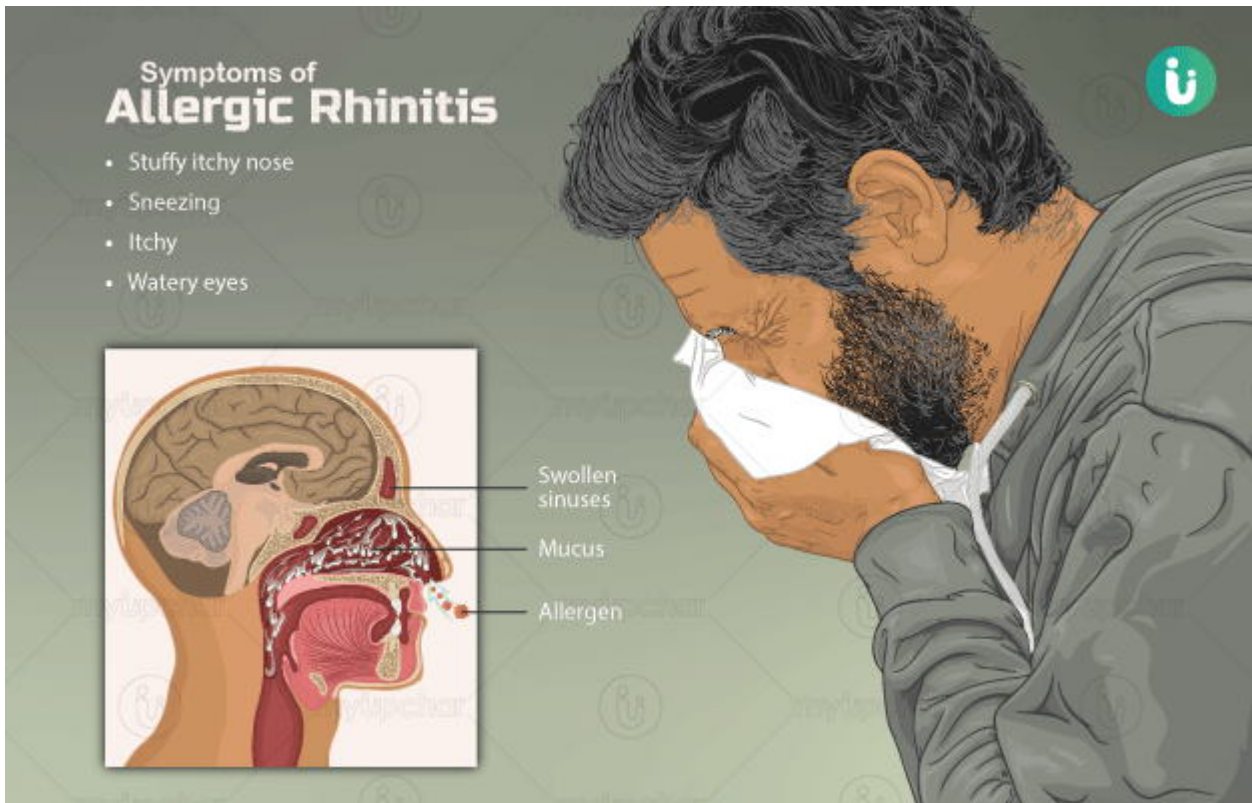


# Allergic rhinitis

## What is an allergy?

Allergy is the body's reaction to an external agent. The nasal mucosa prevents external contaminants like dust, pollen, and other micro-particles from reaching the lungs by trapping them. These agents can initiate an allergic response in the mucosa. Allergic Rhinitis is inflammation of the nasal mucosa to an allergen.

**Note:** Allergy can be seasonal (as in the case of specific pollen grains), non-seasonal (all year), or occupational (like in the wood or any Dusty environments in the industry).



## What are the causes of allergic rhinitis?

Allergic rhinitis can be hereditary. But not all people are allergic. A few of us will be **sensitized** to certain external factors that can initiate an allergic reaction. So when a sensitized person comes in **contact with an allergen, it releases histamine, which will cause allergic reactions in the nose, leading to allergic rhinitis** and its symptoms, including a runny nose, sneezing, and itchy eyes.

Pollen is the most identified causative agent for allergic rhinitis. The other allergens are grass pollen, dust mites, animal dander, which is old skin, cat saliva, and mold.

External factors that can trigger or worsen this condition are cigarette smoke, chemicals, cold temperatures, humidity, wind, air pollution, hairspray, perfumes, colognes, Deo sprays, wood smoke, and fumes



## What are the symptoms of allergic rhinitis?

For many people, allergic rhinitis is a lifelong condition. A recent survey shows that nearly 10 percent of adults in the world experience allergic rhinitis of some kind. Also, allergies affect about 33 percent of Indians.

- Sneezing, running nose or stuffy or blocked nose
- Itching and irritation of the nose
- Coughing, post nasal drip
- A dark line on the tip of the nose, nasal crease

**Allergic manifestations are also seen in the eyes. The major eye symptoms are**

- Itchy and watery eyes
- dark circles under the eyes
- headaches
- eczema-type symptoms, such as having extremely dry, itchy skin that can blister and weep

You may usually feel one or more of these symptoms immediately after coming into contact with an allergen. Few symptoms, such as recurrent headaches and fatigue, may only happen after long-term exposure to allergens.



### **Important note:**

It is important to note that children can also develop allergic rhinitis. It typically appears before the age of 10. Your child may develop cold-like symptoms at the same time each year, this means they probably have seasonal allergic rhinitis.

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Remember, the symptoms in children are similar to those in adults. Children

usually develop watery, bloodshot eyes, which is called allergic conjunctivitis. Your child may have asthma if you also notice wheezing or shortness of breath in addition to other symptoms.

### **What's the treatment for allergic rhinitis?**

Treatment of allergic rhinitis needs medical and lifestyle changes. Firstly avoidance of triggers is the key to controlling allergies.

An ENT doctor and immunologist may evaluate you to identify the causes of your allergy.

The acute phase of allergic rhinitis is managed medically with antihistamines, decongestants, anticholinergics, and topical eye preparations. Intranasal corticosteroids and mast cell stabilizers will help reduce the response to allergens.

Immunotherapy is saved for more severe cases of not responding to medications. They are given as injections, need 5-6 doses depending on the severity, and are comparatively costly.

There is no surgical correction for allergic rhinitis, surgical clearance of its complications like sinusitis can only be done. **Remember, - allergies can rarely be cured, they are always kept under control, just like diabetes or hypertension, by making necessary lifestyle modifications.**

### **What are the complications of allergic rhinitis? ?**

Long-standing allergic rhinitis can cause chronic sinusitis, nasal polyposis, headaches, otitis media with effusion, and hearing loss.

Non-ENT complications include developing bronchial asthma, hernias, retinal detachment, chest pain, urinary incontinence, and acid reflux.

### **How early do I see my doctor?**

Visit your ENT doctor if you experience severe symptoms, have signs and symptoms that aren't relieved by over-the-counter medications or self-care, or have bothersome side effects from over-the-counter or prescription medications for rhinitis, or itchy, watery eyes, sneezing, nasal congestion, itching, and

rhinorrhea or running nose.

**Talk to your doctor about possible allergies if your symptoms last for more than a few weeks and don't seem to be improving.**

- Dr. Prashanth R Reddy

“E.N.T. health - ENTry for better senses”.

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