

Allergic Rhinitis (Hay Fever)



What Is Allergic Rhinitis?

Allergic rhinitis, also called hay fever, happens when your body's immune system attacks pollens or other substances. Hay fever is caused by breathing in these substances through your nose or mouth. Common things that cause hay fever include dust, pollen, smoke, and animal dander. People can be allergic to many different things.



What Are the Warning Signs of Allergic Rhinitis?

Symptoms of allergies can include:

- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Itchy throat and nose
- Stuffy nose
- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Puffy or watery eyes



How Is Allergic Rhinitis Diagnosed?

- Your doctor will ask about your symptoms, including when your symptoms happen and what seems to cause them.
- Your doctor will also listen to your lungs and look at the inside of your nose, ears, mouth, and throat.
- If you need more testing, your doctor may refer you to a doctor who specializes in treating allergies. That doctor might test how your skin reacts to being pricked with a very small amount of certain allergens.
- Blood tests may also be needed.



How Is Allergic Rhinitis Treated?

The best treatment for hay fever is prevention. This means avoiding what causes your symptoms. Since that can sometimes be hard, there are other options. Treatment may include:

- Nasal rinses to wash out your sinuses
- Medicines to reduce your symptoms like allergy medicines, medicines for a stuffy nose, and nasal sprays
- Allergy shots, which train your body to react less to allergens

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Questions for My Doctor

- Do I have more than one allergy?
- What changes should I make around my home?
- Can I have a pet?
- Will I need more tests?
- Which medicines will work best for my allergies?
- Do I need to use these medicines every day?
- What should I do if I'm going to be around something that makes my allergies worse?
- Do my allergy medicines have any side effects?
- Do I need allergy shots?



Bottom Line

- Allergic rhinitis, also called hay fever, happens when your body's immune system reacts to allergens. Hay fever is caused by allergens that are breathed in through your nose or mouth.
- Symptoms include sneezing, runny, stuffy, itchy nose, itchy throat, and coughing. Many people also have puffy and watery eyes.
- Treatment may include avoiding the things that cause allergies. If that isn't possible, treatment can include allergy medicines, medicines for a stuffy nose, or using a nasal spray.

For More Information

- **MedlinePlus:** www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000813.htm
- **American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology:** www.aaaai.org/allergist/allergies/Types/rhinitis/Pages/default.aspx

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