

# ALLERGIC RHINITIS

## DEFINITION

### Diagnostic Findings

- There is a clear nasal discharge with sneezing, sniffing, and nasal itching.
- Symptoms occur during pollen season.
- Similar symptoms occurred during the same month of the previous year.
- Eye allergies are commonly associated.
- Sinus or ear congestion is sometimes associated.

### Cause

Allergic Rhinitis, also known as, Hay fever is an allergic reaction of the nose (and sinuses) to an inhaled substance. This sensitivity is often inherited: During late April and May the most common offending pollen is from trees. From late May to mid-July, the offending pollen is usually grass. From late August to the first frost, the leading cause of allergic rhinitis is ragweed pollen. Although the inhaled substance is usually a pollen, it can also be animal dander or other agents your child is allergic to. Allergic Rhinitis is the most common allergy; more than 15% of the population have it.

### Expected Course

This is a chronic condition that will probably recur every year, perhaps for a lifetime. Therefore it is important to learn how to control it.

## HOME TREATMENT

**Antihistamine Medicine.** The best drug for hay fever is an antihistamine. The antihistamine for you child is \_\_\_\_\_. Give \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ times each day.

Symptoms clear up faster if antihistamines are given at the first sign of sneezing or sniffing. For children with occasional symptoms, antihistamines can be taken on days when symptoms are present or expected. For children with daily symptoms the best control is attained if antihistamines are taken continuously throughout the pollen season.

The main side effect of antihistamines is drowsiness. If your child becomes drowsy, continue the drug, but temporarily decrease the dosage. Tolerance of the regular dosage should occur in 1 to 2 weeks.

**GOOD NEWS:** Severe allergic rhinitis can now usually be controlled steroid nasal sprays rather than allergy shots. Since these sprays must be used when the nose is not dripping, antihistamines must be given first to stop the drainage.

**Pollen Removal to Decrease Symptoms of Allergic Rhinitis.** Pollen tends to collect on the exposed body surfaces and especially in the hair. Shower your child and wash his hair every night before going to bed. Avoid handling pets that have been outside and are probably covered with pollen.

### Prevention of Allergic Rhinitis

**Symptoms.** Your child's exposure to pollen can be reduced by not sitting by an open car window on necessary drives, not being near someone cutting the grass during pollen season, staying indoors when it is windy or the pollen count is especially high, and closing the windows that face the prevailing winds. If your child's allergic rhinitis is especially bad and you don't have air-conditioning, you may wish to take him to an air-conditioned store or theater for a few hours. Avoid feathered pillows, pets, farms, stables, and tobacco smoke if any of them seem to bring on symptoms of nasal allergy.

**Eye Allergies Associated with Allergic Rhinitis.** If your child also has itchy watery eyes, wash the face and eyelids to remove pollen. Then apply a cold compress to the eyelids. Your child may benefit from using an eye drop for allergy symptoms.

**Common Mistakes.** Vasoconstrictor nose drops or nasal sprays usually do not help allergic rhinitis. Also, when used for more than 5 days, they can irritate the nose and make it more congested.

## CALL OUR OFFICE

During regular hours if:

- The treatment does not relieve most of the symptoms.
- The secretions become thick yellow for more than 24 hours.
- Your child develops sinus pain or pressure.
- Your child is missing any school, work, or social activities because of his allergic rhinitis.
- The allergic rhinitis keeps your child from playing or sleeping.
- You have other concerns or questions.