

NON-ALLERGIC RHINITIS

Non-allergic rhinitis is a medical condition of unknown cause, leading to symptoms very similar to allergic rhinitis, or hay-fever. This syndrome should be distinguished from allergic rhinitis, a syndrome that immunoglobulin E (IgE) is thought to mediate. Non-allergic rhinitis may be diagnosed by means of clinical evaluation or by means of allergen skin testing or radioallergosorbent testing (RAST).

Approximately half of people suffering from allergies also have a non-allergic component to their symptoms. Unlike allergies, which can be a seasonal problem, symptoms of non-allergic rhinitis are typically year-round. Non-allergic rhinitis also tends to be more common as people age, whereas allergic rhinitis tends to affect children and young adults. Non-allergic rhinitis has many different forms:

- Vasomotor rhinitis is triggered by physical conditions such as strong odors, perfumes, changes in temperature and humidity, smoke, fumes and bright sunlight. Most patients experience a runny nose, post nasal drip and/or nasal congestion. Itching of the nose and eyes is typically not present.
- Infectious rhinitis is typically related to a viral or bacterial infection, and symptoms can mimic a sinus infection, with facial pain and green nasal discharge. However, these patients do not have evidence of a sinus infection on x-rays. This disease process resolves on its own within a few days, and responds to oral antibiotics in severe or prolonged cases, just as a sinus infection would.
- Hormonal rhinitis can occur during pregnancy and in patients with low thyroid function. Pregnant women usually have symptoms of severe nasal congestion occurring during their second month of pregnancy, and this can persist until the baby is born. Symptoms typically disappear shortly after delivery.
- Medication-induced rhinitis can occur in many patients using high blood pressure medication, birth control pills and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (such as aspirin and ibuprofen).
- Rhinitis medicamentosa is related to overuse of over the counter decongestant sprays, such as oxymetazoline or Afrin, with symptoms of severe nasal congestion and runny nose. People who over-use these sprays essentially become "addicted" to the medication, needing more and more medication to control their symptoms.
- Gustatory rhinitis can be related to food or alcohol intake, but is rarely due to an allergic cause. People suffering from this form of rhinitis experience a runny nose, usually of a clear, watery fluid, particularly after eating hot or spicy foods.
- Rhinitis related to acid reflux disease is particularly common in young children, with symptoms of nasal congestion, runny nose and post-nasal drip. Symptoms may tend to occur after heavy meals, or in the morning after the person has been having acid-reflux while lying flat at night.