Nonallergic rhinitis triggers
- Airborne odors or irritants such as dust, smog, perfume, hair spray, cleaning solutions, secondhand smoke
- Changes in temperature or humidity, cold air
- Emotional or physical stress
- Hormonal changes, especially in women
- Hot or spicy foods, alcoholic drinks
- Medications such as aspirin, ibuprofen, ACE inhibitors, beta-blockers, sedatives, antidepressants, birth control pills, and erectile dysfunction drugs
- Overuse of decongestant nasal sprays
- Viral infection

Allergic rhinitis triggers
- Animal dander
- Chemicals in shampoos, detergents, cosmetics
- Cockroach droppings
- Dust mite droppings
- Foods
- Insect stings (eg, bees, wasps, fire ants)
- Medications such as penicillin
- Molds
- Nickel
- Poisonous plants (eg, poison ivy, oak, or sumac)
- Pollen

Common allergic and nonallergic symptoms
Symptoms that are common in people who have allergies and in those who don’t include:
- Chronic sneezing
- Runny nose
- Stuffy nose
- Postnasal drip

People with these symptoms have either allergic rhinitis or nonallergic rhinitis. Allergic rhinitis occurs when the immune system reacts to a foreign protein such as pollen or dust mite droppings. People with allergic rhinitis are said to have allergies. Nonallergic rhinitis does not involve the immune system.

Finding out if it’s allergic or nonallergic rhinitis
There are 2 types of diagnostic tests that can help. One is a skin test. The other is a blood test. If either test is negative, the person might have nonallergic rhinitis.

A skin test requires a separate puncture for each allergen that might be causing the symptoms. With the blood test, there is only one skin puncture. Doctors can choose which allergens to include in the blood test, thus tailoring the test for each person. Blood testing is especially useful when the person’s...

Spring is here again. The birds are singing and it’s warming up. Most of us are happy about this, but some may be dreading springtime. This is because some people have more problems with allergies in the spring. Plants are growing and flowers are blooming—and the pollen count is rising.

But it’s important to remember that some allergy-like symptoms aren’t always caused by allergies. And treatment outcome depends on pinpointing all the allergic and nonallergic triggers. This is because the more simultaneous triggers the person is exposed to, the worse the symptoms are likely to be. Identifying and avoiding all the triggers can go a long way toward helping a person feel better.

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Rhinitis

- Has a widespread skin disease
- Has a high risk of anaphylaxis (a severe, systemic reaction to the allergen challenge) from skin testing
- Is receiving medications (e.g., beta-blockers, angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors, and some antihistamines and tricyclic antidepressants) that interfere with skin testing
- Is uncooperative due to a mental or physical impairment

The blood test can be used for patients 3 months of age and older, regardless of skin condition. There is no need to stop current medications before drawing a blood sample.

Additionally, nasal endoscopy or a computerized tomography (CT) scan can be used to look for a structural abnormality that might be causing nonallergic rhinitis.

Treatment—avoiding the triggers

The most important thing is to avoid the trigger(s). This is true for both allergic and nonallergic rhinitis. So, narrowing down the possibilities using a medical history and diagnostic testing is crucial. When total avoidance isn’t possible, other things can be used to help the patient feel better.

Some tips for avoiding allergens

Once the allergic and nonallergic triggers are identified, the affected person can try to avoid them. Avoiding them should help him/her feel better. Here are just a few ways to avoid the triggers:

- Use an air conditioner and have someone change the filters regularly; this helps decrease pollen, molds, and house dust mites.
- Consider using a dehumidifier to help prevent mold and keep humidity constant.
- When landscaping, choose nonflowering plants that require little water; this helps decrease pollen and molds.
- Vacuum or dust each week; this helps decrease pet dander, dust mites, and cockroach droppings.
- Use allergen-proof covers for mattresses and pillows; this helps decrease pet dander and house dust mites.
- Stay away or wear a mask when grass is being cut or a room is being cleaned; this helps decrease contact with pollens, molds, pet dander, and house dust mites.
- Don’t overuse decongestant nasal sprays; overuse can trigger the very symptoms the person is trying to prevent.
- Get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat a healthy diet; this helps avoid viral infections.

Rhinitis facts

- Allergic rhinitis is more common (about 3 times) than nonallergic rhinitis.² ³
- 10% to 30% of the world’s population have allergic rhinitis.⁴
- In 2007, there were 13.4 million visits to a doctor, hospital, or emergency room for allergic rhinitis problems.⁵
- $11.2 billion were spent on allergic rhinitis treatment in 2005.⁶
- 4 million workdays are lost each year because of hay fever.⁷
- People with allergic rhinitis have 3 additional doctor office visits, 9 more prescriptions filled, and $1500 more in healthcare costs in 1 year than people without it.

References


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