

You have been found to be suffering from a called rhinitis. This literally means “an inflammation of the nose”, sometimes the inflammation is caused by allergy but it is frequently impossible to define all or any of the substances to which you may be sensitive. It may be something in the air you breathe, the food you eat or the clothes you wear, but your nose may be upset simply by changes in air temperature or humidity. There are three main ways in which you can be helped or can help yourself.

### **Avoidance**

If you know or suspect you know what it is that upsets your nose, you may be able to avoid it. For example, if contact with a friend’s cat gives you a blocked and runny nose try to keep away from cats as far as possible.

**Pollen** – is more difficult to avoid but you can plan your leisure time more easily by keeping an eye on the pollen count which is published in the national newspapers during the summer. If you are allergic to pollen, it would be sensible to spend your holidays beside the sea than on a farm. Do not forget that other countries have different pollens and you may find your symptoms are actually worse when you are abroad.

**House dust mite** – is probably the most common allergen. This is mainly a problem in the bedroom where most of us spend eight hours of the day – a third of our lives! All of us shed tiny powdery scales of skin into our clothes and bedding and this powder is home for microscopic insects called mites. If you are sensitive to house dust mites, it is well worthwhile trying to reduce the amount of dust in the bedroom. Ideally, another member of the family should do the work which involves thorough cleaning of the room every day. Use a vacuum cleaner to get the dust up from the carpet (and

do not forget those areas out of sight under the bed and other bedroom furniture). The curtains need to be “hovered” too. Strip the bed and take all the bedding out of doors and shake it. Teddy bears get dusty too and should not really go to bed with suffers. Feather pillows and duvets should be replaced with bedding with synthetic filling, and a matters cover may be helpful too.

**Food** – you may have noticed that your nose is worse after certain foods, particularly dairy products or red wine. Sometimes this is due to allergy and it would be sensible to avoid foods which are likely to upset you.

**Smoking** – Is bad for you! Tobacco smoke paralyses the normal cells inside your nose and lungs and will certainly make your rhinitis worse. Try to give it up and keep away from second hand “smoke” as well.

### **Local treatment**

There are a number of different local treatments which may be prescribed for you. Do not confuse these with the drops and sprays (Vick, Sinex etc.,) you can buy over the counter; these are quite different and should only be used for a maximum of two weeks, for example when you have a cold. The nose spray which has been recommended for you works gradually and it is intended for long term use. It is quite safe for you to use the spray for months or years and it will not lose its effectiveness with time. Use the spray regularly whether your nose it giving you trouble or not you should keep it with your toothbrush, so you will not forget to use it when you start the day and when you go to bed. If you have been advised to use more than one puff in each nostril, try to tilt the container so that way a larger area of nasal lining gets treated. Make sure you ask your doctor for fresh supplies long before you run out.

## Antihistamine medicines

You may be given some pills or medicines to take as well. Modern antihistamine drugs are likely to make you feel sleepy, although you should be careful for the first few days, these drugs are quite safe to take long term but you may find that you can reduce the dosage or even stop taking them for most of the time when your symptoms have come under control.

## Surgery

There is very little benefit from surgery in most cases of rhinitis but you may be offered an operation to correct structural abnormalities inside your nose. The underlying tendency to allergy will remain and you will need to continue the spray and medicines after your operation.

# ENT

## Allergic Rhinitis



An information leaflet for patients.

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