

Title: Seasonal Allergies - what you need to know

Author: Ilvy H Friebe

Date: 2/27/2007

Key words: Seasonal allergies, allergic rhinitis, antihistamines, intranasal corticosteroids, allergens

Abstract:

Over 50million Americans suffer from seasonal allergies every year. Allergies are cause by the bodies' exaggerated immune response to allergens, such as pollens and dust. Multiple different treatment options are being heavily marketed, including oral agents and intranasal corticosteroid sprays. Studies have shown that nasal sprays are most effective in alleviating symptoms, but it is best to discuss with a healthcare professional what individual options are best for each patient.

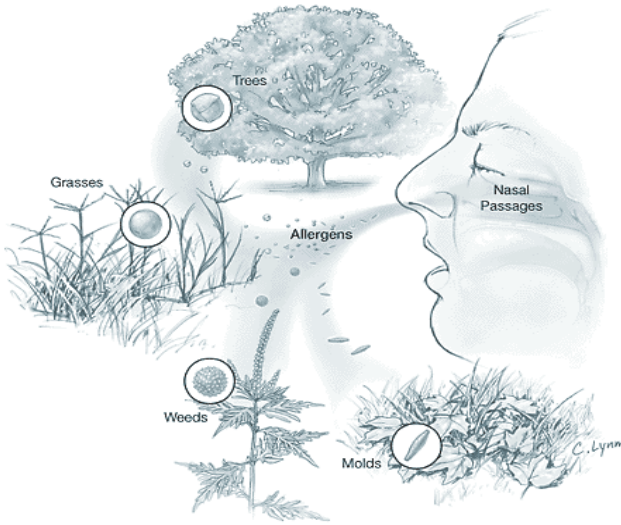
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SEASONAL ALLERGIES

what you need to know

Ilvy H Friebe

University of Minnesota Medical School



➤ *What is Allergic Rhinitis?*

Allergic rhinitis, otherwise known as hay fever or seasonal allergies, is a condition that affects over 20% of the U.S population. It is a collection of symptoms that involves mostly the eyes and nose, causing watery eyes, itchy eyes, runny nose, sneezing and a general feeling of malaise.

➤ *What causes Allergic Rhinitis?*

It is caused by the bodies' exaggerated immune reaction to allergens. Allergens are airborne particles, most commonly dust, dander and pollens. When the body first comes into contact with these allergens, it produces an immune response. Initially, there is a release of particles (including histamines and leukotrienes) from the cells. Later, inflammatory cells are recruited. This process leads to vasodilation, vascular leakage, glandular secretions and nerve irritation which ultimately causes runny nose, sneezing, congestion and itching.

➤ *Who gets Allergic Rhinitis?*

It can occur in anyone, but certain individuals are more predisposed due to family history and other co-morbid conditions, such as Asthma and Eczema – these individuals are called atopic.

➤ *Is there a difference between indoor and outdoor allergies?*

No, because the mechanism of action is the same for all allergens.

➤ *How do you treat Allergic Rhinitis?*

There are many products on the market to treat the symptoms of allergic rhinitis. These products have different mechanisms of action and there are significant differences in their efficacy. Nasal corticosteroid sprays, Eye drops and oral agents are the most commonly used treatments.

- *Oral Antihistamines (Zyrtec, Allegra, Claritine):* These agents inhibit histamine release from the cells. They are effective in controlling sneezing and itching, but not runny nose. When taken at higher doses they also can cause drowsiness.

- *Oral Leukotrience receptor antagonists (Singulair):* These agents inhibit leukotriene release from the cells. They are similar in efficacy to antihistamines.

- *Intranasal Corticosteroid Sprays (Flonase, Nasonex, Rhinocort):* These agents decrease the number of inflammatory cells and therefore decrease secretions. Several studies have shown that they are superior to other agents in controlling nasal symptoms.

- *Decongestants (Sudafed):* These act by constricting the blood vessels in the respiratory system and thereby decreasing the production of secretions. They should not be used in people with high blood pressure and several other medical conditions.

The best treatment is avoidance of allergens as well as a combination of a nasal spray and an oral agent with or without a decongestant, depending on your other medical conditions. Discuss with your doctor what the best options are for you.