

Allergic Rhinitis



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Allergic rhinitis is commonly called allergies. When you breathe in something that you are allergic to, such as pollen, mould, dust mites or pet dander, you might start sneezing or coughing and get a runny nose or itchy or watery eyes. The most important thing you can do to feel better is to avoid the things that cause your allergies. Also avoid being around cigarette smoke and strong smells. If you do not know what causes your allergies, see your health-care provider.



HELPFUL HINTS FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE ALLERGIES

If you are allergic to pollen:

- Keep the windows and doors of your home and car closed.
- If you need to use air conditioning, set the unit to recirculate or the indoor cycle.
- Do not use window or attic fans.
- Check the weather report to find out about the pollen count. The pollen count tells you what kind of pollen is in



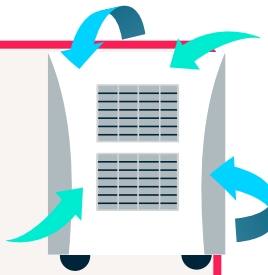
the air and how much. Avoid spending time outdoors when the pollen count is high. The pollen count is highest on sunny, windy days and in the morning.

- Do not dry your clothing outdoors.
- Shower or take a bath and wash your hair after outdoor activity. This will remove pollen from your hair and skin. You want to avoid getting pollen into your bedding.



If you are allergic to outdoor moulds:

- Stay indoors as much as possible.
- If you need to use air conditioning, set the unit to recirculate or the indoor cycle. Have your air conditioner cleaned regularly; air conditioners can be heavily contaminated with mould.
- Use of face masks for activities such as raking leaves or working with compost or dry soil may have limited value because air seeps around the edges of the mask and the mask does not protect the eyes.



If you are allergic to indoor moulds:

- Kill mould with a solution of equal parts household bleach and water. Wash sinks, shower stalls, nonrefrigerated vegetable storage areas and garbage pails with this solution.
- Avoid using a humidifier or cool mist vaporizer. Moulds grow easily where it is damp. If you must use one, clean it often with a solution of equal parts bleach and water.
- If your home is built over a crawl space, install a plastic vapor barrier over exposed soil and keep the foundation vents open.
- If your basement is damp or tends to flood, do not put carpet or furniture there. For a damp basement, run a dehumidifier at all times. Empty water from the machine often and clean it regularly. For a flooded basement, drain the water as quickly as possible.
- Fix any leaky faucets or pipes promptly.
- Do not keep plants in your home; if you do have them, keep soil surface dry and free of debris to reduce mould growth.



If you are allergic to a pet:

- The best choice is to find another home for the animal. It can take several months before the allergen levels return to normal.
- If you are not able to give up your pet, then:
 - You may find it helps to install a HEPA or electrostatic air purifier in your home.
 - Keep animals out of your bedroom at all times.
 - Keep animals out of rooms that have carpets.
 - Try to keep animals off furniture.
 - Washing cats weekly and dogs twice weekly may help, though this has not been proven.
 - Get rid of litter boxes if possible. If not, put them in an area that is not connected to the air supply for the rest of your home.
 - If the animal lives in a cage, keep it in a room without carpet, far away from your bedroom.



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If you are allergic to dust mites:

- Do not put carpet in your bedroom or main living areas.
- Plastic, leather or wood furniture is best.
- If possible, have someone else clean your home when you are not there.
- If you must do your own cleaning, wear a face mask while you clean and for 10-15 minutes afterward.
- Use a vacuum cleaner with an efficient double-filtration system.
- Keep indoor humidity between 40% and 45%. You can buy a hygrometer to measure the humidity in your home at a hardware store or home centre.
- Avoid using a humidifier or cool mist vaporizer. If you must use one, clean it often with a solution of equal parts bleach and water.
- Use zippered, allergen-proof casings on all mattresses, box springs and pillows.
- Consider replacing old mattresses.
- Wash your bedding in hot (>55°C) water at least every 2 weeks. Cooler water will not kill dust mites.
- Do not keep stuffed toys that cannot be washed/dried.
- Do not store items under your bed.
- Use window shades instead of venetian blinds or curtains.



MEDICATION TO HELP WITH ALLERGY SYMPTOMS

You may want to try medication if:

- You don't feel better even when you avoid the things that cause your allergies.
- Your allergies are interfering with your sleep or your daily activities.

Your pharmacist can help you pick the best medication option for you (pills or nasal spray/drops) and show you how to use it (see directions below).



How to Use a Nasal Spray

- Gently blow your nose.
- Gently shake bottle and remove cap or lid.
- With your head upright but not tilted backward, press your finger against one side of your nose to close the nostril. Spray the medication into the open nostril, with the tip directed away from the middle of the nose and back towards the nasal cavity. Squeeze the bottle quickly and breathe in slowly through the nose.
- Remove tip of nasal spray from your nostril and breathe out through your mouth.
- Repeat with other nostril.
- Blow your nose 3-5 minutes later.
- Rinse the tip of the spray bottle with hot water, but try not to get water in the bottle. Replace lid.
- Do not use more nasal spray than the recommended amount.

How to Use Nasal Drops

- Gently blow your nose.
- Lie on your back on a bed with your head hanging slightly over the side (adults or older children) or, for infants or young children, lie them flat on their back in a safe position with their neck protected.
- Gently shake bottle. Fill the dropper with the recommended amount of medication. Put the dropper just inside one nostril (about 0.8 cm or one-third inch). If possible, don't let the dropper touch the skin.
- Apply the recommended number of drops.
- Repeat with other nostril.
- Stay in the same position for about 5 minutes, tilting the head from side to side.
- Blow your nose 3-5 minutes later.
- You can also use nasal drops by tilting your head back (instead of lying down). Use the recommended number of drops for each nostril. Then bend over at the waist and hold that position for a few seconds before coming up straight again.
- Rinse the dropper with hot water and return it to the bottle.
- Do not use more nasal drops than the recommended amount.

