



# Allergic Rhinitis, Hay Fever and Asthma

Allergy UK Helpline 01322 619898

[www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)

 AllergyUK

# What is allergic rhinitis?

Allergic rhinitis is a common condition that affects both children and adults. It can cause symptoms all year round, this is called perennial allergic rhinitis, or you may have symptoms occurring at certain times of the year e.g. summer time, this is referred to as hay fever or seasonal allergic rhinitis.

Allergic rhinitis is caused by inflammation in the lining of the nose that is triggered by an allergen. The nose and mouth in the upper airway are the entrance to the respiratory tract, and allergens and irritants that are inhaled (breathed in) have the potential to cause allergic symptoms.

## What are the symptoms of allergic rhinitis?



Runny or congested nose



Itchy nose, mouth, ears and throat



Itchy, watery eyes



Sneezing



Coughing



Persistent blocked stuffy nose / sinus pressure



Wheeze or difficulty breathing can occur if you also have allergic asthma

## When should I seek help for allergic rhinitis symptoms?

Most people with allergic rhinitis will be able to manage their symptoms by taking a daily non-sedating antihistamine. These are available in tablet and syrup form, and you can speak to a pharmacist who will be able to advise you on the best choice for your individual needs. If your symptoms do not improve using a daily antihistamine and/or other allergy medications e.g. nasal spray, or your symptoms last more than two weeks and affect you carrying out everyday tasks, seek advice from a healthcare professional such as your GP or practice nurse.

# What is asthma?

Asthma is a lung condition that causes difficulty breathing. It affects the lower airways and symptoms can include:



Breathlessness



Tight feeling in the chest



Wheeze (whistling sound when breathing)



Cough

Having **allergic asthma** makes you more likely to have difficulty breathing (asthma attacks) or worsening of your asthma if you come into contact with triggers, including colds or infection.

Asthma symptoms can be severe, requiring urgent medical help, and occasionally can be fatal. If you suspect you have symptoms of asthma it is important you seek advice from a healthcare professional to receive an accurate diagnosis and the right care and treatment.

## Allergic rhinitis and asthma

**90%** of people with asthma have allergic rhinitis

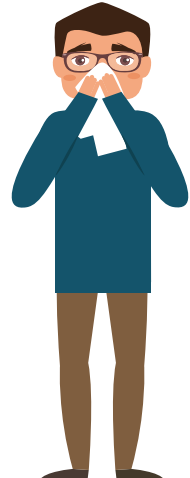
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**30%** *approximately* of people with asthma have undiagnosed allergic rhinitis

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**10-40%** of people with allergic rhinitis have symptoms of asthma



# Why is it important to treat allergic rhinitis?



## Infection

Untreated allergic rhinitis can lead to infections of the nose, often affecting the sinuses and conjunctivitis in the eyes.



## Worsening asthma symptoms

If you have asthma, not treating your allergic rhinitis or hay fever symptoms adequately can lead to worsening of symptoms and increases the risk of a sudden asthma attack.



## Risk factor for developing asthma

Having poorly managed allergic rhinitis or hay fever can lead to asthma developing. It is important to make sure hay fever symptoms are treated adequately, especially in children



## Impact on everyday life

If allergic rhinitis or hay fever is not treated, symptoms may include irritability, lack of sleep, affect your ability to concentrate at work or school and to carry out simple tasks, and even affect your mental health. Having severe seasonal allergic rhinitis can affect you being able to participate in outdoor activities and even impact on your career, especially if you work outdoors.

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Treating allergic rhinitis symptoms in people with asthma has been shown to reduce asthma exacerbations and A&E visits by up to

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**80%**

# Allergic asthma triggers

## Indoor allergens



House dust mite



Animal dander



Mould spores



Cockroach

## Irritants



Perfumed products



Rapeseed



Pollutants

## Outdoor allergens



Grass pollen



Tree pollen

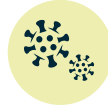


Weed pollen



Mould spores

## Other triggers



Infections



Stress



Hormonal changes

## Tips to reduce exposure to outdoor triggers:

Wear a mask, wraparound sun glasses and or a hat with a peak or large brim to keep pollen allergens out of your eyes and face.

On high pollen days, shower, wash your hair and change your clothes when you arrive home.

Keep windows closed. This is most important in the early mornings, when pollen is being released, and in the evening when the air cools.

Avoid mowing lawns or raking leaves yourself.

Avoid drying clothes/linen outside when pollen counts are high.

Wipe pets down with damp cloth to remove pollens.

## Tips to reduce exposure to indoor triggers:

**House dust mite:** cover your mattress in a protective cover, wash your bedding weekly above 60 degrees (if possible), wash or freeze soft toys, damp dust and vacuum floors and soft furnishings regularly.

**Pets:** keep pets out of your main living areas, especially your bedroom. Or as a last resort, you may need to consider rehoming your pet if this allergen triggers severe asthma - [Download our Cat Allergy Factsheet here.](#)

**Irritants:** avoid fresh flowers in the house e.g. lilies, limit the use of perfumed products including detergents and air fresheners, avoid open coal and wood burning fires if this causes symptoms to worsen.

**For more information visit the [AllergyHouse.co.uk](http://AllergyHouse.co.uk)**

# Treatment for allergic rhinitis and asthma

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## Nasal barrier balm

Apply to the rim of the nostril to prevent allergens and irritants from going up the nose.

2

## Skin wipes

To remove pollen from skin, use with caution as they may irritate sensitive skin.

3

## Nasal douching

To wash out the nose, removing any allergens that may be trapped after blowing the nose.

4

## Saline eye drops

To wash out any allergens that may be irritating the eyes.

5

## Antihistamines

Can reduce the symptoms of itch, especially in the nose, throat and eyes, and reduce a runny nose. It is recommended to use a long acting, non-sedating antihistamine for adults and children over the age of two years. Speak to your pharmacist or healthcare professional if you are unsure which products are suitable for you or your child's symptoms. Antihistamine preparations are also available for the nose and eyes.

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## Nasal steroids

Available on prescription from your GP and very effective for reducing the inflammation associated with the 'stuffy nose' feeling of hay fever and may also help to reduce allergic eye symptoms. It is important to take your nasal spray correctly to get the most from your medication - [BSACI: how to apply a nasal spray](#).

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## Inhaled steroids

Available on prescription and are very effective for reducing the inflammation and symptoms associated with asthma. This medication needs to be taken on a long term basis, at least four to six weeks, for it to start to be effective - [Asthma UK: Using your inhaler](#).

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## Reliever inhaler

This can be used as an immediate 'reliever' of breathing difficulties when asthma symptoms worsen. - [Asthma UK: Using your inhaler](#).

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## Aero chamber

This is a tube that you can put your inhaler in to make the asthma medication more effective.

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If symptoms are still severe and affecting your ability to carry out daily tasks, including school/work, it is important to speak to your healthcare professional and discuss further treatment options.

We're here to help



Contact our Helpline Monday - Friday, 9am-5pm:

Call: 01322 619898

Webchat: [allergyuk.org](https://allergyuk.org)

Email: [info@allergyuk.org](mailto:info@allergyuk.org)



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