

What is an ALLERGY?

Allergy is a condition, often inherited, in which the immune system of the affected person reacts to something that is either eaten, touched, or inhaled that doesn't affect most other people. The patient's immune system reacts to this substance as if it were an "enemy invader" (like a virus). This reaction leads to symptoms that often adversely affect the patient's work, play, rest, and overall quality of life.

Allergens Cause Allergies

Any substance that triggers an allergic reaction is called an allergen. Allergens "invade" the body by being inhaled, swallowed or injected, or they may be absorbed through the skin. Common allergens include pollen, dust and mold.

How Common are Allergies?

Allergies are among the nation's most common and costly health problems. They affect as many as one in four people. More than 50 million Americans have allergic rhinitis. The yearly sales of antihistamines, decongestants, nasal cromolyn and nasal corticosteroids now exceeds \$5 billion.

What are the Symptoms of Ear, Nose and Throat Allergies?

People often think of allergy as only "hay fever," with sneezing, runny nose, nasal stuffiness and itchy, watery eyes. However, allergies can also cause symptoms such as chronic "sinus" problems, excess nasal and throat drainage (post nasal drip), head congestion, frequent "colds," hoarse voice, eczema (skin allergies), recurring ear infections, hearing loss, dizziness, chronic cough and asthma. Even stomach and intestinal problems as well as excessive fatigue can be symptoms of allergy. Symptoms of ear, nose, and throat allergies may include:

- * Repeated sneezing
- * Nasal itching and rubbing
- * Nasal congestion
- * Runny nose
- * Dark circles under the eyes
- * Crease across bridge of nose
- * Frequent throat clearing
- * Mouth breathing
- * Diminished/lost sense of smell/taste
- * Recurrent, unexplained nosebleeds
- * Recurrent ear infections
- * Recurrent sinus infections
- * Fluctuating hearing loss
- * Cold-like symptoms more than 10 days
- * Symptoms recur same time each year
- * Chronic fatigue
- * Symptoms can range from minor to severe.

The greater the frequency and/or amount of exposure, the greater the chance that the susceptible person will develop an allergic problem that will require treatment.



What causes Symptoms to Begin?

There is no "usual" way for an allergy to begin; the onset may be sudden or gradual. Often, symptoms develop following an unusual stress to the immune system, such as a severe viral infection.

Can an Allergy be Outgrown?

No, but it is common for people to change the way their allergic symptoms affect them. For example, a baby may develop colic, recurrent ear infections, or have eczema, but as it grows older, it may develop different allergic symptoms such as hay fever, fluid behind the eardrum, or asthma.

How do we make the Diagnosis?

The initial or presumptive diagnosis of allergy is made by history and physical examination. If one wishes to be certain of the diagnosis and proceed to treat the patient effectively, the findings must be confirmed by tests that identify the specific offending allergens.

Who can treat my Ear, Nose, and Throat Allergies?

Because allergies can produce such a wide range of symptoms, there are a number of doctors, both specialists and primary care physicians, who may be qualified to treat the allergic patient.

Who should **TREAT** my **Allergies?**

An Otolaryngic Allergist is able to diagnose and treat disorders of the upper respiratory tract (ear, nose, throat etc.) caused by allergic conditions. Because the Otolaryngic Allergist is an ear, nose, and throat surgeon and specialist (ENT), other non-allergic diseases of the upper respiratory tract can also be efficiently diagnosed and treated.

Half of the problems that an ENT doctor encounters are probably caused, either directly or indirectly, by allergy. Chronic nasal congestion and post nasal drip, seasonal or constant, is often allergic and may be complicated by chronic sinus and middle ear disease. Hearing loss, dizziness, head-aches, weeping ear canals and chronic sore throats may be due to allergy.

The ENT doctor who does his/her own allergy treatment is able to follow the patient's progress with specialized examinations and medical and surgical treatment, such as polyp removal, placement of middle ear ventilating tubes, straightening of the nasal septum, and treatment of sinus infections.

The American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy

The American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy (AAOA) is a group of specialty physicians dedicated to the quality care of patients with allergies of the ears, nose, and throat.

They are board certified specialists in Otolaryngology (ear, nose, and throat).

Members of the AAOA may attain the designation of Fellow (FAAOA) by meeting certain requirements, including passing a detailed examination covering the practice of Otolaryngic Allergy.

For more information about current Allergy Practice, please ask your Doctor or contact:

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF OTOLARYNGIC ALLERGY



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