



University Hospitals Sussex
NHS Foundation Trust

Managing Rhinitis

Patient Information

What is Rhinitis?

Rhinitis is a term used to describe inflammation of the lining of the nose. It usually involves a blocked, runny or itchy nose and possibly bouts of sneezing.

These symptoms may occur throughout the year, or they may be present only occasionally (in Seasonal Rhinitis like hayfever, for example).

For some people the symptoms are a result of allergy (Allergic Rhinitis). Or in rare cases, the condition may be caused by infection. However, the cause of rhinitis is often not clear. It may be associated with other problems, such as wheezing (in asthma) and eczema (particularly in children).

What is the treatment?

Investigations are not usually necessary for this condition. Scans or x-rays are only likely to be arranged if it is thought that your sinuses are involved. If you have Allergic Rhinitis, skin tests may be helpful in identifying the cause of your allergy.

Surgery has a minor part to play in this condition, but may be appropriate in a few carefully selected patients. It is seldom possible to actually cure Rhinitis in the long term, so treatment is aimed at helping to control the symptoms through medication in the form of tablets and nasal sprays.

Nasal Sprays

Steroid Sprays

These are usually water-based sprays in a pump. Most are designed not to be absorbed by the body in large amounts and are therefore safe for long-term use.

It is important to use these sprays daily – not just when the symptoms are troublesome.

If this kind of spray is prescribed, you may find it takes up to 6 weeks of use before you notice an improvement.

Ipratropium Bromide Spray

This spray will help stop your nose running, but will have no effect on blockage, irritation or sneezing. It is most effective when used regularly.

Tablets

Antihistamines

These act within hours of starting treatment and are most useful for hayfever. Drowsiness is sometimes a problem with this type of medication (though less so with the newer tablets), and the problem is made worse by alcohol. We recommend against drinking alcohol while taking antihistamines.

An important note

Many ‘over the counter’ nasal drops and sprays – Ephedrine®, Otrivine® and Sudafed®, for example – are designed for short-term use only (one to two weeks). Long-term use may affect the lining of the nose, leaving it feeling permanently blocked.

Where can I get further information?

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

Website: www.nhs.uk

Who can I contact with any concerns or questions?

If you have any problems or are worried, please do not hesitate to contact us in the Ear, Nose and Throat Outpatient Department.

Royal Sussex County Hospital: 01273 696955 Ext. 64813

This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath

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Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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