



ALLERGIC RHINITIS AND CHRONIC IDIOPATHIC URTICARIA BACKGROUNDER

More Americans than ever before say they are suffering from nasal allergies. It is among the country's most common, yet often overlooked, diseases. Estimates from the Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America suggest that approximately 40 million Americans have indoor or outdoor allergies.

Allergic Rhinitis and Symptoms

Allergic rhinitis is caused by inhaled allergens that are mistakenly identified as intruders by the immune system, which generates a reaction against them. During this reaction, immune system cells release substances such as histamine and leukotrienes that cause the symptoms of allergic rhinitis. These and other substances cause inflammation in the nasal lining. Symptoms of allergic rhinitis may include:

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Stuffy nose (congestion)
- Itching in the nose, roof of the mouth, throat and ears

When allergic rhinitis is caused by common outdoor allergens, such as airborne tree, grass and weed pollens or mold, it is called seasonal allergic rhinitis, or more commonly, "hay fever."

Allergic rhinitis is also triggered by common indoor allergens, such as animal dander (dried skin flakes and saliva), indoor mold, droppings from dust mites and cockroach particles. This is called perennial allergic rhinitis. On average, Americans spend more than 20 hours indoors each day, which can contribute to year-round perennial allergic rhinitis in some patients.

Impact of Indoor and Outdoor Allergies

Several recent studies have qualified the various ways in which indoor and outdoor nasal allergies can seriously affect the lives of sufferers.

The negative impact that nasal allergies can have is demonstrated in a survey conducted in 2007 on 683 seasonal and year-round allergy sufferers. The survey findings revealed that almost three-quarters (74%) of those diagnosed with nasal allergies agreed that they do not feel like themselves when they are suffering from their allergies. In addition, 81% of respondents agreed that they have adjusted their lives to deal with their nasal allergies and more than half (53%) of nasal allergy sufferers surveyed agreed that they avoid various activities such as being outside, traveling and socializing because of their nasal allergies.

An Ohio State University study conducted in 2007 showed that nasal allergy sufferers can miss up to 32 hours of work in a week when indoor and outdoor allergens are at their peak.

The average worker with nasal allergies misses about one hour per week over the course of a year; but that sick time is often concentrated during peak nasal allergy periods.

Another recent study from Ohio State University found that psychological stress and states of anxiety can worsen seasonal nasal allergy attacks and prolong their occurrence. The researchers estimate that Americans pay \$2.3 billion for nasal allergy medications each year and \$1.1 billion for doctor visits to treat allergy attacks.

Urticaria Symptoms

Urticaria, also called hives, are red, itchy, swollen areas of the skin that can range in size and appear anywhere on the body. They are caused by a chemical in the body called histamine which is released from certain cells.

Diagnosis and Treatment of Chronic Hives of Unknown Origin

Chronic Urticaria (CU) lasts more than six weeks. The cause of chronic urticaria is more difficult to identify and is found only in a small percentage of patients. The dermatologist reviews a patient's medical history, asks extensive questions, and conducts a thorough physical examination. Testing, such as blood work or a biopsy, may be necessary. When causes of chronic urticaria are not identified, the condition is called Chronic Idiopathic Urticaria or chronic hives of unknown origin.

Once type of urticaria is determined, a physician or nurse will help the patient develop a treatment plan. A physician may prescribe medication to decrease your symptoms.

Treatments for CIU and allergic rhinitis are complex and may include oral antihistamines.

The efficacy, safety and range of symptom coverage vary among therapies.

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