Rhinitis

What is rhinitis?

Rhinitis refers to inflammation of the nose. There are three main types:
- Allergic rhinitis
- Non allergic rhinitis
- Atrophic rhinitis

What are the symptoms of rhinitis?

The symptoms are varied and may include a runny nose, sneezing, nasal obstruction, nasal crusting and a bad smell (fetor).

What is allergic rhinitis?

Allergic rhinitis is an immunological intolerance to environmental allergens. Seasonal allergic rhinitis (hayfever) occurs at certain times of the year while perennial allergic rhinitis can occur throughout the year. Allergens causing allergic rhinitis include house dust mites, pollens (trees, grasses, weeds), animal hair (cat, dog) and molds. Allergic rhinitis is very common, affecting 10-20% of the population.

What is non allergic rhinitis?

Non allergic rhinitis is inflammation of the nose. It differs from allergic rhinitis in that the precipitating factors are not the classical allergens associated with rhinitis (house dust, pollens, cat/dog dander).

What causes non allergic rhinitis?

There are many different causes. Common causes include exposure to irritants in the air (cigarette smoke, perfumes), exercise, changes in the weather, cold air, spicy foods, certain medications, hormonal changes (pregnancy) and ‘vasomotor rhinitis.’

Vasomotor rhinitis, or idiopathic rhinitis, is another form of rhinitis where there are no obvious precipitating factors. The cause for this condition is unknown. Typically, the condition presents in the adult years. It is the most common cause of rhinitis in patients older than 50.

What is atrophic rhinitis?

Atrophic rhinitis is a nasal mucosal disease characterized by crusting and fetor. It is also called the ‘empty nose syndrome’

What causes atrophic rhinitis?

The most common cause is previous surgery. This occurs when excessive nasal tissue has been removed from the nasal cavity. Why this should occur is not completely understood. Other causes include trauma and radiotherapy.

What are the main symptoms of atrophic rhinitis?

The main symptoms are nasal crusting, fetor, diminished smell and paradoxical nasal blockage. The nasal blockage is despite the nasal cavity being widely patent. In some patients these symptoms can be debilitating.

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