

Backgrounder

The same symptoms, different causes:

Rhinitis : A cold or an allergy?

It is winter. The nose is running, the sneezing doesn't end. „I' m having a cold“, many concerned people think. But the symptoms don't cease. Fungal spores or allergens are able to induce the same symptoms as a viruses or bacteria. The latter takes seven to ten days to disappear. In the beginning the discharge is thin and watery. People feel discomfort. An allergic rhinitis is a little bit different. Symptoms come and go. The nose is blocked and itches. An overview is given by the following table.

	Cold	Flu	Allergic Rhinitis		Nasal Eosinophils	Hormonal Rhinitis	Drug-induced Rhinitis	Atrophic Rhinitis	Idiopathic Rhinitis
			Seasonal	Perennial					
Causes	Viruses	Flu virus	Pollen, spores	Dust mites, domestic pets	???	female hormones	i.e. blood pressure med., Aspirin, decongestants	Hereditary (?)	???
Symptoms									
Runny nose	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)		✓
Discharge characteristics	Initially watery then thick & yellowish green		Watery	Watery	Watery	Watery	watery		watery
Sneezing	In early stage		✓	✓	?				✓
Sore throat	✓	✓							
Cough	✓	✓							
Itching			✓	(✓)	?				✓
Others	Headaches, lethargy, discomfort	Generalized aching	Asthma danger	Cigarette smoke, traffic fumes exacerbate the symptoms	Nasal Eosinophils, without Antibodies	Blocked nose	Blocked nose	Crusting, foul odor	Blocked nose
Seasonal	Mostly in winter		Aug.-Sept.	perennial	perennial	during pregnancy	perennial	perennial	perennial
fever	Slightly	✓							
Duration	7-10 days	Weeks or months	Allergy season	perennial	perennial	Starts in the 2. month	As long as medication is used	perennial	perennial