

Non-Allergic Rhinitis

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ENT North

Non-allergic rhinitis is a condition where the lining of the nasal passage becomes inflamed and irritated, but the trigger is not allergies. Some triggers can irritate the nose ("irritant rhinitis"), such as smoke, perfumes, or chemicals. In other cases, the nose reacts to otherwise normal environmental triggers (such as air conditioning, eating or exercise) by becoming congested and very runny ("vasomotor rhinitis").

It is often harder to treat non-allergic than allergic rhinitis, due to a more limited range of targets to address (for example, avoiding allergic triggers is not helpful, and allergy desensitisation is not effective).

Options Include:

- Avoid known nasal irritants where possible: swap to less irritating household cleaning products, avoid perfumes, wood smoke, quit smoking etc. If air-conditioning is a trigger, consider using a fan or tolerating a slightly warmer home if possible.
- Antihistamine sprays, either by themselves (e.g., Azep) or in combination sprays (e.g. Dymista or Ryaltris) can sometimes be effective, especially for itching/irritation symptoms.
- Atrovent nasal forte can be helpful if the main symptom you have is thin dripping. It can be used both as a preventer just prior to exposure to a known trigger (e.g., use it before eating if your nose runs with meals), and also if you have an episode of sudden unexpected dripping. You will need a script from your family doctor or specialist.
- Capsaicin based sprays: capsaicin is found in chilli and capsicum ("Pepper spray") and gives them their pungent taste and smell. Regular application of this type of spray to the nose depletes the chemical transmitters that make nerves fire off in the nose. The result is a nose lining that is less sensitive to environmental irritants.
 - Capsaicin based sprays are not available to purchase in Australia but are legal to import from overseas for personal use. Brands include Capsinol (<https://capsinol.co.uk>). Follow the instructions for use on the package.
 - You will usually need two-three bottles for best results. Use three times daily until you no longer feel any 'sting' from the spray, which is usually the point when your nasal symptoms will improve. Repeat this process if your symptoms return.
- Saline rinsing or steroid sprays can sometimes help but are often not effective. Trial these for one month and continue if they provide you with benefit. Cease them after a one-month trial if you do not notice they help.
- Intranasal spray decongestants (Sinex, Logicin, Otrivin etc) *should be avoided* unless you only need to use them very occasionally, and for no more than 2-3 days at a time. If you use them daily for more than a week, they will make your symptoms MUCH worse.
- Surgery has a place when there are structural reasons for your nasal symptoms, such as a deviated septum, enlarged turbinates, or underlying sinus disease. However, it is often ineffective for treatment of isolated non-allergic rhinitis if these other issues are not present, and may make your symptoms worse.