

## Seasonal Allergies – Dr. Charles P. Catania, MD

Allergic rhinitis is the medical term for hay fever or nasal allergies. Allergic rhinitis is swelling of the nasal passages caused by allergens. It's important to note that while many people refer to it as hay fever, it is not caused by hay. Nor does it cause a fever. Allergic rhinitis is triggered by having allergies. You have an allergy when your body overreacts to things that don't cause problems for most people. These things are called allergens.

There are 2 forms of allergic rhinitis:

- **Seasonal (hay fever):** Caused by an allergy to pollen and/or mold spores in the air. Pollen is the fine powder that comes from flowering plants. It can be carried through the air and is easily inhaled. Symptoms are seasonal and usually occur in spring, late summer, and fall. This is the most common form of allergy.
- **Perennial:** Caused by other allergens such as dust mites, pet hair or dander, or mold. Symptoms occur year-round.

### Symptoms can include:

- Sneezing, Coughing, Itching (mostly eyes, nose, mouth, throat, and skin), Runny nose, Stuffy nose, Headache, Pressure in the nose and cheeks, Ear fullness and popping, Sore throat, Watery, red, or swollen eyes, Dark circles under your eyes, and Trouble smelling.

Allergic rhinitis cannot be prevented. You can help your symptoms by avoiding the things that cause your symptoms.

- Keep windows closed. This is especially important during high-pollen seasons.
- Wash your hands after petting animals.
- Use dust-and mite-proof bedding and mattress covers.
- Wear glasses outside to protect your eyes.
- Shower before bed to wash off allergens from hair and skin.

You can also avoid things that can make your symptoms worse, such as:

- Aerosol sprays
- Air pollution
- Cold temperatures
- Humidity
- Irritating fumes
- Tobacco smoke
- Wind
- Wood smoke

Several medicines can be used to treat allergies. Nasal steroids are often the most effective treatment. Your doctor will help you determine what medicine is best for you depending on your symptoms, age, and overall health. If you are pregnant, your doctor will advise what medications are safe for you to take. Some allergy symptoms during pregnancy are a naturally occurring part of being pregnant and not allergic rhinitis.

Living with the symptoms of allergic rhinitis can affect your daily life. Nasal symptoms can be worse when lying down. This can disturb your ability to sleep well. Fatigue and headaches can affect your ability to function at school and work.

There is also a link between asthma, eczema, and allergic rhinitis. Therefore, getting good control of allergic rhinitis is crucial for maintaining good control of asthma.

There are many medicines and treatments that can help you manage your symptoms. Talk to your doctor as soon as you feel that your symptoms are getting worse or are not easy to control. Your doctor can help you come up with the right plan to control allergies, so they don't affect your ability to live your normal life.

When should you see a doctor:

- **Your symptoms have gotten worse.** If you've had allergies for years, your symptoms may have gradually worsened over time without you realizing it. Think back five or 10 years. Was allergy season always this bad?
- **There are complications.** Do your seasonal allergies often cause sinus infections or make it hard for you to breathe?
- **You also have asthma.** If you think that you're developing seasonal allergies and you've already been diagnosed with asthma, see your doctor. Having allergies may make it harder for you to breathe or manage your asthma. Specialists who treat asthma often treat allergies, as well.
- **It feels like forever.** Have you been congested, sneezing and/or wheezing for weeks on end, or across multiple seasons? Seasonal allergies typically last longer than a cold, but you may want to talk to a doctor if your symptoms are lingering longer than expected.
- **Your quality of life is affected.** Do you need to be outdoors for work, or do you typically choose to spend a lot of your free time outdoors? If you aren't willing or able to be cooped up indoors for weeks on end, an allergist may be able to offer you workable solutions.
- **Over-the-counter (OTC) medicine doesn't help.** For some people, OTC medicine doesn't offer enough relief from allergy symptoms. Other people may not be able to function well at work while under the influence of OTC medication, if they experience side effects like drowsiness.

Dr. Charles P. Catania, is the Chief Medical Officer for PentaHealth, he is Board Certified in Family Medicine and Hospice Medicine. He received his medical degree from the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine; medically trained in England; and completed residency at Underwood Memorial Hospital in Woodbury, New Jersey, where he was named Chief Resident in 2009 and served on the New Jersey Academy of Family Physicians Board of Directors.

Dr. Catania has been in a private practice setting since 2010 and has been named "Readers' Choice Top Doc" in South Jersey Magazine in August 2013, and "Top Doc" by his peers in Mainline Today Magazine in 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Dr. Catania has an interest in all facets of family medicine. He enjoys spending time and getting to know his patients on a personal level and providing care when they need it most. He loves working our walk-in hours and in our PentaHealth today clinic on Sundays.

He treasures time with his wife and children, and he takes pride in bringing a very personal and friendly experience when caring for his patients here at PentaHealth.



Dr. Charles P. Catania