

## Allergies and Snoring

The woman who divorced her noisy partner told her friends that she was allergic to his snoring. What she didn't realize is that his snoring was due to allergies.

The trumpeting noise associated with snoring is generated by airflow trying to push its way through an obstructed airway. While snoring is not an illness, it can be symptomatic of other health conditions, even an allergic reaction.

Allergic rhinitis is a health condition in which the membrane lining the throat and nose become inflamed. The inflamed membrane lining creates an obstruction in the airway, which in turn causes snoring. This condition is usually triggered by an allergic reaction to an inhaled substance. Seasonal allergic rhinitis is also known as hay fever.

Seasonal allergic rhinitis is usually due to trees, grass and other plant pollens, and occurs mainly in spring and summer when pollen counts are high. Perennial allergic rhinitis lasts yearlong, and is generally caused by an allergy to mold spores, animal fur, feathers, dust mites or house dust.

The symptoms of allergic rhinitis are quite clear:

- \* Sneezing
- \* Blocked or runny nose
- \* Red, watery, itchy eyes
- \* Itchy, irritated nose
- \* Headache
- \* Nosebleeds (not common)
- \* Snoring

If you believe that you are suffering from an allergic reaction, but you're not sure of the cause, your doctor can perform a skin prick allergy test. However, such tests are not fully conclusive, as some allergens will avoid identification.

In the event that you've pinpointed the cause of your reaction and taken steps to avoid it, your symptoms should subside very rapidly without further treatment. Some allergens, like pollen, are virtually impossible to avoid. In this case it may be necessary to take an anti-allergy drug to find relief.

Anti-allergy drugs in the form of nasal spray often contain sodium cromoglicate, a substance that blocks the allergy. Nasal sprays can be used as decongestants, but long-term use is not recommended. Corticosteroid drugs are often prescribed for hay fever, although their effectiveness is not instantaneous. Oral antihistamines may

be used along with a decongestant to relieve inflammation and itching.

If allergic rhinitis is a persistent problem, your doctor might suggest immunotherapy, a procedure that desensitizes the immune system. Immunotherapy patients are injected with a series of gradually increasing doses of the allergen, to encourage the body to accept the substance without reacting. While immunotherapy can be an effective treatment for some allergy sufferers, it can take as many as four years for the treatment to be completed, and it is not always successful.

If you feel your snoring problem is caused by allergic rhinitis, there are several treatments available to help alleviate the problem. Try avoiding obvious allergens like furry animals. Use pillows and quilts with synthetic stuffing rather than feathers or down. Cover your mattress with a mite proof membrane. Remove soft furnishings and clean regularly to prevent dust collecting. Avoid visiting areas with long or newly cut grass. Purchase a pollen filter for your car and a HEPA filter for your home.

By avoiding the causes, your allergic reactions should diminish, and your allergy-induced snoring can disappear altogether.