

Frequent Infections Due To Respiratory Allergy

What Is It?

People with respiratory allergies are prone to develop respiratory infections. In fact, people with allergies often will have a series of infections, and will not be aware that allergies are really the root of the problem. They will come to believe that they "just get" a lot of ear infections, bronchitis, nose and sinus infections, and pneumonia. This is especially true with children. **Allergy is the most common cause of repeated respiratory infections in children.**

What Causes It?

Being prone to infection is partly because the lining of the airways (called mucus membranes) is changed by the allergies. There is swelling, and there is more mucus. These changes cause the lining to lose its ability to fight off disease. When this happens, an infection can set in. There is really a vicious cycle going on for many patients. They have allergies which make them prone to infections. When they get an infection, it is treated as a simple infection. Then, when the infection is cleared up, they still have the allergies ... they're still prone to infections, so they get another infection, and it gets treated, but they still have the allergies ... and on and on!

Severe swelling of the lining of the nose can cause a blockage of some important openings. When this happens, those areas cannot drain. The mucus is trapped, and it collects in the area. This provides an ideal place for infections to grow.

What Usually Happens?

The recurrent infections of children will usually clear up around age 9 or 10 years. Until that time, there are many infections of the ears, nose, sinuses and lungs. When the condition occurs in adults, the infection just keeps coming back. They are most often in the form of bronchitis and sinusitis.

What Problems May Occur?

Recurrent ear infections can cause hearing loss and other hearing problems. The hearing loss can be permanent. Frequent bronchitis and pneumonia can lead to many days of illness. Scar tissue can form in the lungs. Frequent nasal and sinus infections can cause headaches, constant nasal congestion, and nasal polyps. Polyps are small growths which can be removed only by surgery.

What Makes It Worse?

Letting your allergy problems remain severe will make the problem worse. Also, keeping a chronic infection without having it treated will worsen the problem. Even treating the infection will not get rid of the problem if allergies are the basic cause. **The only way to clear it up for good is to treat the allergies.**

What Happens When It Is Treated?

The infections will decrease, both in number and severity, as the allergy is brought under control. This will prevent months, even years, of infections that would have happened if the allergies weren't treated.