

## Postnasal Drip

### What is Postnasal Drip?

Postnasal drip is when mucus drips down from the back of the nose into the throat. Many things can cause postnasal drip, including allergies, pollution, certain foods, or changes in temperature. The mucus can have different colors and thicknesses. This depends on what is causing it.

A common cause of postnasal drip is swelling of the inner lining of the nose. This is called *rhinitis*. Sometimes, this is caused by allergies. Discolored, bad-smelling postnasal drip can be caused by disease in the sinuses, called *sinusitis*. This is sometimes caused by an infection with a virus or bacteria. Sinusitis can be short term (acute) or long term (chronic). It can cause you to have a stuffy nose, thick mucus, facial pressure, and trouble smelling. Reflux of stomach acid can also cause swelling and mucus in the nose and throat. This adds to the feeling of postnasal drip. Postnasal drip may also have other causes or be a result of a combination of issues.

### Symptoms of Postnasal Drip

Mucus is normally made by the inner lining of the nose, sinuses, and throat. It protects these areas by keeping them wet and filtering the air we breathe. However, too much mucus or very thick mucus can feel uncomfortable. Sometimes, it can make it hard to swallow or make you feel like you need to swallow more frequently. Thick mucus in the throat can cause you to cough and clear your throat. When this happens at night, it can affect sleep. Postnasal drip can also cause sore throat.

### Diagnosing Postnasal Drip

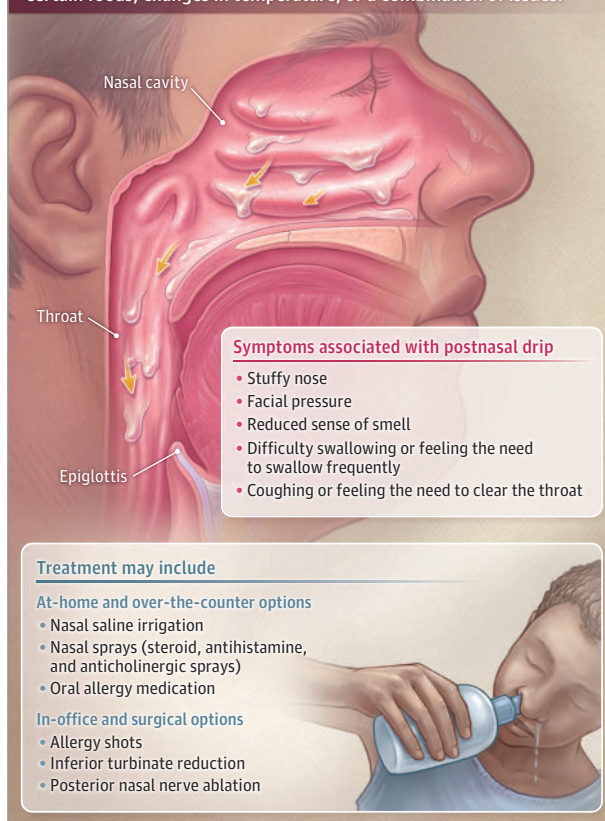
Describing your symptoms to your primary care doctor may help them determine the cause of your postnasal drip. They may send you to a specialist, such as an ear, nose, and throat doctor (ENT or otolaryngologist). An ENT may look inside the nose and throat with a camera. If allergies could be the cause of the drip, allergy testing may be needed. If you are coughing a lot, examinations of the lungs, such as radiography, may be needed as well.

### Treatment of Postnasal Drip

There are many treatments for postnasal drip. The choice of treatment depends on the cause. Flushing the nose with salt water or using medicated nasal sprays, such as steroid, antihistamine, or anticholinergic sprays, can make you feel better. There are also procedures that can be done in the doctor's office or in the operat-

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ing room that can help. These procedures work by shrinking some of the lining of nose (inferior turbinate reduction) or by removing nerves that increase mucus production (posterior nasal nerve ablation). Allergy treatment with medication or allergy shots can be added if you have allergies.

If you have acid reflux, it is good to avoid big meals before bedtime. You should also avoid sour, spicy, and fatty foods. Sometimes, it is helpful to take antireflux medications, such as a proton pump inhibitor or H2 blocker, to decrease acid in the stomach.

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