



Nose won't stop running

Question

Hi Alice,

My nose is continually running even though I don't have a cold. I keep on blowing it but it runs and then it plugs up. This cycle happens all the time. Help me, Alice!

Answer

Dear Reader,

Go easy on the honking! Repeatedly blowing your nose can actually be detrimental to your nasal health. Blowing your nose can cause mucus to be propelled back into the sinus cavity. Moreover, it can irritate the tiny blood vessels in the nostrils — a condition called rhinitis — causing inflammation and congestion. Common symptoms of rhinitis include a runny nose, nasal itching, nasal congestion, and sneezing. Instead of harshly blowing your nose, take these suggestions in to consideration:

- Hold a tissue under your nose to "catch" what's running out. This more gentle treatment may help you begin to dry up.
- Sit in a steam room or shower.
- Eat hot and spicy foods (that'll clear out your sinuses)!
- Stay hydrated with non-caffeinated beverages — dehydration can aggravate symptoms.
- Use a neti pot, which helps flush mucus out of the nasal passages (also known as nasal irrigation).
- Cover your nose and blow very gently through one nostril.

Paper tissues are the medium of choice here, rather than handkerchiefs. Although handkerchiefs may seem more environmentally friendly, they are breeding grounds for germs. Wash your hands when you're finished because germs from your nose and tissue can be easily transferred to your fingers.

In the meantime, you may want to consider the cause of your nosy nuisance. Runny noses are notorious during the cold season, and can persist due to pesky allergens, reactions to seasonal change, stress, hormonal shifts, and environmental irritants. You may be suffering from rhinitis brought on by one of the following culprits:

- Allergies can be caused by a multitude of irritants, both large and small. Common allergens that trigger rhinitis include pollen, mold, animal dander, house dust, dust mites and cockroaches, and some foods. Your health care provider may also prescribe steroids (oral or nasal spray) or antihistamines if your symptoms are from allergies.
- Viral infections (such as the common cold) cause swelling of the nasal membranes and production of thick, clear mucus. If it persists for many days and your mucus becomes yellow or green, it may have become secondarily infected by bacteria.

To fix this leaky faucet and determine the best course of action, it is recommended that you speak with your health care provider. It's helpful to discuss your symptoms, nasal triggers (including details such as how thick or

thin the mucus is and the color), and about any medications that you may be taking. Please, breathe easy and go gentle on your nose — clear passages are coming your way!

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