

How Allergies Affect your Child's Ears, Nose, and Throat

Does your child have allergies? Allergies can cause many ear, nose, and throat symptoms in children, but allergies can be difficult to separate from other causes. Here are some clues that allergies may be affecting your child.

Children with nasal allergies often have a history of other allergic tendencies (or atopy). These may include early food allergies or atopic dermatitis in infancy. Children with nasal allergies are at higher risk for developing asthma.

Nasal allergies can cause sneezing, itching, nasal rubbing, nasal congestion, and nasal drainage. Usually, allergies are not the primary cause of these symptoms in children under four years old. In allergic children, these symptoms are caused by exposure to allergens (mostly pollens, dust, mold, and dander). Observing which time of year or in which environments the symptoms are worse can be important clues to share with your doctor.

Ear infections: One of children's most common medical problems is otitis media, or middle ear infection. In most cases, allergies are not the main cause of ear infections in children under two years old. But in older children, allergies may play role in ear infections, fluid behind the eardrum, or problems with uncomfortable ear pressure. Diagnosing and treating allergies may be an important part of healthy ears.

Sore throats: Allergies may lead to the formation of too much mucus which can make the nose run or drip down the back of the throat, leading to "post-nasal drip." It can lead to cough, sore throats, and a husky voice.

Sleep disorders: Chronic nasal obstruction is a frequent symptom of seasonal allergic rhinitis and perennial (year-round) allergic rhinitis. Nasal congestion can contribute to sleep disorders such as snoring and obstructive sleep apnea, because the nasal airway is the normal breathing route during sleep. Fatigue is one of the most common, and most debilitating, allergic symptoms. Fatigue not only affects children's quality of life, but has been shown to affect school performance.

Pediatric sinusitis: Allergies should be considered in children who have persistent or recurrent sinus disease. Depending on the age of your child, their individual history, and an exam, your doctor should be able to help you decide if allergies are likely. Some studies suggest that large adenoids (a tonsil-like tissue in the back of the nose) are more common in allergic children.