

# Long-term bouts with hay fever worsen ability to breathe through your nose

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New evidence for the first time suggests that people suffering from hay fever (allergic rhinitis) will over time experience a progressive worsening of their nasal passage functioning, depending on how long they have the disorder, according to a new study published in the June 2008 edition of *Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery*.

The study, authored by researchers in Italy, discovered that in 100 patients (50 with short-term rhinitis, and 50 with long-term), those who experienced longer bouts with the disorder (on average, nine years) had significantly lower airflow in their nasal passages. Furthermore, 72 percent of the patients with long-term rhinitis had “severe” nasal obstruction.

Allergic rhinitis, commonly referred to as hay fever, occurs when the body’s immune system over-responds to specific, non-infectious particles such as plant pollens, molds, dust mites, and animal hair, among others.

This causes skin redness and swollen membranes in the nasal passages, combined with sneezing and congestion. It is estimated that between 10 and 20 percent of the American population suffers from hay fever, and accounts for approximately 2 percent of all visits to a doctor’s office.

Source: American Academy of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery

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