

The Mystery of Post-Nasal Drip

The advent of spring is generally seen as a happy time of renewal and joy at overcoming another brutal New York winter. For many, however, the season will be marked by misery caused by nasal problems. The blooming of flowers and trees unleashes millions of pollen molecules that will cause itching, sneezing and congestion. The warmer temperatures will usher in a slew of spring viruses like rhinovirus, coronavirus and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), that lead to fever, chills, runny nose and cough.

One of the most bothersome symptoms common to all nasal ailments is post-nasal drip. A common misconception is that nasal mucus only occurs when something is wrong. Rather, the nasal lining, or mucosa, makes about 1-1.5 liters of mucus a day which is swept without much fanfare by the beating of millions of little tails, or cilia, down the back of the nose which we swallow regularly along with our saliva. When the mucus is produced at the proper rate and viscosity we don't even notice this process and it is as automatic as our breathing. When allergies flare or we have a viral infection, the sudden change in volume and thickness can make it feel like we are drowning in our own juices.

Worse still, the swelling of the mucosa and the increased mucus can cause the sinuses to obstruct and get backed up. Just like a river that gets blocked by a dam, the clear running mucus will then become murky, thick and smelly resulting in the dreaded acute bacterial sinusitis. Patients can then experience intense facial pain, swelling and even thicker and more troubling post-nasal drip.

Luckily, most of the time, the symptoms will resolve on their own or with the help of a primary care doctor. For some, the conditions may become chronic, lead to polyp growth or simply not respond to first line medicines. These difficult situations are handled by a specialist called an otorhinolaryngologist

or more commonly, an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor. These doctors are trained in both the medical and surgical treatment of nasal and sinus disease.

A rhinologist is a type of ENT specialist that has had additional training and



Dr. Marina Boruk, MD

Photo courtesy of SUNY Downstate

focuses on complex nasal and sinus disease and surgery. They also work closely with other specialists like ophthalmologists and neurosurgeons to deal with tumors or complications of sinusitis within the eye or along the borders of the brain.

Whether it is a miserable post-nasal drip that comes every spring or something more worrisome, a rhinologist will be able to help you professionally and safely.

Dr. Marina Boruk is board certified by the American Board of Otolaryngology — Head & Neck Surgery, and is fellowship trained in Rhinology, Minimally Invasive Skull Base Surgery, as well as Otolaryngic Allergy. Her two primary offices are located in Park Slope at 376 Sixth Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11215 (718-499-0940) and in Downtown Brooklyn at 185 Montague St., 5th Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201 (718-780-1498).



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