

[IMAGE]

The Nose Knows

Rhinitis, the inflammation of the nasal membranes from allergies, afflicts approximately one-quarter of all people in industrialized nations. Hypertension, or high blood pressure, affects a similar percentage of people and increases risks for multiple health problems and death. A study in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* showed there may be a relationship between the two conditions.

Approximately 300 Parisian adults participated in the study, which compared blood pressure levels and presence of hypertension in individuals with and without rhinitis. Participants who had hay fever or any major allergies that caused a stuffy nose were considered to have rhinitis.

Researchers found that the systolic blood pressure was significantly higher (approximately 7 mm Hg) in men with rhinitis than in men without the condition, even after taking into account other risk factors.

Hypertension was two-and-a-half times more likely in men with rhinitis than in those without it. There was no significant relationship between rhinitis and hypertension in women.

The reason for the relationship between rhinitis and high blood pressure is unknown, although researchers speculate it may have to do with sleeping problems (e.g., snoring or obstructive sleep apnea) caused by the condition. Men suffering from rhinitis or any form of nasal allergy should have their blood pressure checked often by a physician.

Reference:

Kony S, Zureik M, et al. Rhinitis is associated with increased systolic blood pressure in men: A population-based study. *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* 2003;167, pp. 538-543.

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