Spring is well and truly here, and for most people with allergic rhinitis (hayfever), symptoms are manageable and do not significantly interfere with one's quality of life. However there are some who have severe debilitating allergic rhinitis who require medications on a regular basis to control their symptoms. In Australia, the two commonest triggers of allergic rhinitis are dust mite and grasses (in NSW/Victoria, rye grass/bermuda grass and bahia grass, are the commonest triggers of seasonal allergic rhinitis).

For those with severe allergic rhinitis, we often discuss the option of aero-allergen immunotherapy (also called desensitisation). This is the regular administration of commercially prepared airborne allergens extracts (e.g. house dust mite, grass, dog/cat dander, etc). Immunotherapy aims to re-educate the body's immune system so that when the person is exposed to the allergen again, the immune system response to that allergen is dampened.  It is usually given as a **3 year course,**either as regular injections into the subcutaneous tissue (fat) in the back of the arm (often monthly injections given by a doctor/nurse) or as daily drops/tablets under the tongue (which can be done at home).

Immunotherapy is proven to be an effective treatment to reduce symptoms of allergic rhinitis, based on randomised control trials. Its effects are long lasting and most individuals only need to do it once in their lifetime. Immunotherapy is used in addition to nasal sprays and/or antihistamines, but the need for these medications should decrease as the immunotherapy takes effect.Immunotherapy is not on the PBS and there is an out of pocket cost (usually allergens produced for injections are cheaper than the tablets/drops).

So if you are suffering with allergic rhinitis and it is interfering with your day to day quality of life, see an experienced Allergist/Immunologist to discuss the pros and cons of aero-allergen immunotherapy.