



spotlight on health

Use Caution When Treating Allergy Symptoms

(NAPSA)—It may come as a surprise to some, but allergies can happen at any time of the year, bringing on sneezing, headache, stuffy nose and sinus pressure. Because there is no cure for allergies, only treatments for the symptoms, many sufferers turn to medications for relief. What you may not know is that by treating these different symptoms, you could actually be putting yourself at risk.

A recent telephone survey conducted by TSC, a division of Yankelovich, found many people who report having allergies use medications to treat symptoms such as sinus pressure (77 percent) and headaches (62 percent). When selecting a medication to alleviate their symptoms, most (85 percent) who have allergies use an allergy medication, while nearly half (46 percent) report taking a pain reliever or headache remedy.

The danger in treating multiple allergy symptoms comes in not knowing what active ingredients make up the medications you are taking. By using both an allergy medication and taking a pain reliever or headache remedy, you could accidentally overdose on ingredients commonly found in over-the-counter (OTC) products, such as acetaminophen, an active ingredient that can be found in many medications, including Tylenol. When taken in excess, studies have shown acetaminophen to cause liver failure and other seri-

- It is estimated that 35 million Americans suffer from allergies
- The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America defines allergies as diseases of the immune system that cause an overreaction to substances called allergens
- Allergies are the fifth most common chronic disease in the United States—costing the U.S. economy more than \$7 billion each year.
- For adults, allergies are a major cause of work absenteeism, resulting in nearly 4 million missed or lost workdays each year, resulting in a total cost of more than \$700 million in total lost productivity.



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The TSC survey found that although more than half of respondents (68 percent) knew that acetaminophen could be found in pain relievers and headache remedies, only about one-third (38 percent) knew that it could also be found in allergy medications.

To achieve the greatest benefit from OTC products, it is important to understand your allergy symptoms, as well as the active ingredients in the products you are using to treat them. Further, being aware of warning labels on product labels and packaging is another step you can take to help avoid acetaminophen overdose.

If you have questions, talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist—they can advise you on medications to treat your allergy symptoms.