

Caregivers May Put Loved Ones At Risk When Cold And Flu Hits

High Blood Pressure Sufferers and Caregivers Unaware Decongestants Pose Potential Danger

(NAPSA)—High blood pressure sufferers and their caregivers are no more likely than the general population to know that hypertensive patients should avoid taking decongestants, according to a national survey.

Selecting an over-the-counter (OTC) cold and flu remedy poses little risk for most people when taken as directed, but for the 50 million Americans with high blood pressure, decongestants can lead to potentially serious side effects. The American Heart Association recognizes that decongestants have been reported to increase blood pressure and even interfere with blood pressure medicines.

“High blood pressure patients and those who help care for them should choose medication without a decongestant to avoid potentially serious consequences,” said Dr. Randall M. Zusman, Director, Division of Hypertension and Vascular Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Associate Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School. “Choosing the right cold and flu medications is an important part of a high blood pressure patient’s overall program to manage his or her condition.”

While most hypertensive patients read medication labels, avoid salt and monitor their blood pressure, they sometimes make the wrong choices when selecting cold and flu medication. Only half know that hypertensive patients should avoid cold and flu medications containing a decongestant and only four in 10 always seek the advice of their physicians or pharmacists when selecting an OTC medication to treat their symptoms.

Survey results also imply that people who care for a loved one with high blood pressure are confused about which cold and flu medications are recommended. Dr. Zusman recommends that caregivers have a heart-to-heart with a physician or pharmacist about the importance of avoiding decongestants.

As a co-sponsor of the American Heart Association’s hypertension Web site, Schering-Plough Health-Care Products is helping to educate people with high blood pressure

and those who actively participate in their care about the dangers associated with decongestants.

High blood pressure sufferers and their loved ones can get a free wallet card that lists potentially dangerous ingredients to avoid when choosing OTC medications. It can be obtained by writing to Coricidin HBP Wallet Card Offer, PO Box 88453, Carol Stream, IL 60188-0453.

For more information, high blood pressure patients can visit the American Heart Association Web site at www.americanheart.org/hbp or the Coricidin HBP® Web site at www.coricidinhbp.com.

Heart-Sense Tips for Those With High Blood Pressure for Staying Healthy This Cold and Flu Season

- **Think with your heart when you have a head cold.** If you do get sick and have high blood pressure, be sure to treat your symptoms with the proper over-the-counter medication. This means reading the label carefully and avoiding medications with a decongestant. Ingredients to avoid include pseudoephedrine, phenylephrine, and oxymetazoline.
- **Reduce stress in your life.** Not only does stress increase blood pressure, studies show that long term stress can also reduce immune system levels, making you more vulnerable to upper respiratory illness. Access social support groups—both family and friends.
- **Avoid cigarette smoke.** Smoking is a key risk factor for heart attack and stroke. Those who smoke or are regularly exposed to cigarette smoke are more susceptible to colds and other respiratory illnesses because smoke damages the nasal lining, making it easier for germs to enter the body.
- **Talk to your physician or pharmacist.** If you do get sick and are confused about which OTC medication to select, ask your doctor or pharmacist which one is right for you.