



# Health Awareness

## Clearing The Air About Allergies

(NAPSA)—As many Americans begin to venture outdoors this season, the majority of them will enjoy the warmer temperatures along with the budding trees and blooming flowers. However, it may wreak havoc on the estimated 41 million allergy sufferers nationwide, especially since this year could be one of the worst allergy seasons on record according to some allergists.

“Researchers are estimating that this season may be worse than past years,” says Gary Z. Lotner, M.D. senior physician, at the Atlanta Allergy and Asthma Clinic, Atlanta, Ga. “Pollen forecasters are reporting budding patterns from the tail end of winter that exceed last year’s, an early sign of an ominous spring season.”

Allergy symptoms—which include sneezing, watery eyes, and a runny nose—intensify as the body responds to the presence of an allergen. Pollen is generally the most common allergen, coming from such sources as trees, grasses, and flowers. However, most allergy sufferers are allergic to more than one allergen, thus giving a person an individualized list of potential triggers.

“Most allergy sufferers are sensitive to more than one allergen,” Dr. Lotner says, “so working with your physician to iden-



**Regardless of the cause, relief for allergies may be found in the form of prescription allergy medications.**

tify your unique allergy profile is the first step in controlling allergy symptoms.”

Battling these irritating symptoms is a year-round exercise for about 63 percent of allergy sufferers who are affected by year-round allergies. Not all allergens are seasonal; some, like common indoor allergens, exist 365 days a year. Pet dander, indoor mold, and dust mites are among the most common of these types of triggers, and can make just being home an arduous task for those who are sensitive.

Unlike some other conditions, doctors are not exactly sure what causes allergies. But it is fairly well established that there is a hereditary component to allergies. If one parent suffers from allergies, it is estimated that a child’s

chances of having allergies increase by 25 to 30 percent, according to Dr. Lotner. And if both parents have allergies that number soars to a 75 percent increase in the chance of a child developing allergies, he adds.

Regardless of whether symptoms are caused by seasonal or year-round allergy triggers, relief can be found in the form of prescription allergy medications such as Zyrtec® (cetirizine HCl), manufactured by Pfizer Inc. and marketed by Pfizer and UCB Pharma, Inc. Not all prescription allergy medications are approved to treat both types. Among leading prescription antihistamines, only Zyrtec is FDA-approved to treat both year-round indoor and outdoor allergies.

In studies with Zyrtec, most side effects were mild or moderate including drowsiness, fatigue and dry mouth in adults, and drowsiness, headache, sore throat and stomach pain in children. Drowsiness occurred in 11 to 14 percent of adults, depending on dose, compared to 6 percent taking placebo (sugar pill). Drowsiness occurred in 2 to 4 percent of children, depending on dose, compared to 1 percent taking placebo.

For additional information about allergies, visit the Zyrtec Web site at [www.zyrtec.com](http://www.zyrtec.com).