



Ask Your Pharmacist

Medications Help Sniff Out Allergy Relief

(NAPSA)—Rub, sneeze, blow.

Allergy sufferers the world over know the sequence as itchy eyes, sneezing spells and runny noses signal the onset of another round of allergy suffering. Fortunately, relief is as close as the nearest pharmacy.

An allergy is caused when your body develops sensitivity to a normally harmless substance. This substance is known as an allergen, and the most common include pollen, mold, dust and animal dander.

“When an allergen enters your body through inhalation, swallowing or skin contact, a reaction occurs that results in substances known as chemical mediators being released from your cells into the bloodstream,” said Rite Aid Pharmacist Sarah Matunis, R.Ph. “These chemical mediators then cause a physical reaction that often includes sneezing, itchy eyes, runny nose and rashes.”

You can develop an allergy at any age, but onset usually occurs in adolescence. Allergies are also more common in children with parents who have allergies. And, some allergies are seasonal and geographic in nature because the allergen is present only at particular times or locations. For example, pollen from blooming grass is prevalent in Pennsylvania from mid-May through mid-July. In Arizona, the pollen season is February through November.

“Because there is no cure for allergies, the key to allergy relief is to avoid the allergen that is triggering the physical reaction,” said Matunis. “People allergic to pollen should stay inside during

Allergy or Cold?		
<i>Symptom</i>	<i>Allergy</i>	<i>Cold or Infection</i>
Nasal Discharge	Clear, thin & watery Non-irritating	Clear, changing to thick, yellow-green Local irritation
Fever	No	Low grade
Muscle Aches	No	Often
Itching	Ears, nose & throat	Rarely
Sneezing	Common in ‘spells’	Sometimes
Duration	Weeks to months	7-10 days
Seasonal	Often	Rarely
Adapted by Rite Aid from the Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America		



the peak times of 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. and on hot, dry days. People allergic to animal dander should avoid being around pets. But, sometimes it’s impractical to avoid the allergen. That’s when medication can help you prevent or find relief from the allergy symptoms.”

Antihistamines are the most common product allergy sufferers turn to for relief, and these products are often coupled with a decongestant if congestion is present. Available at your local pharmacy without prescription, antihistamines can provide relief for a runny nose, itchy eyes and sneezing. The downside is that they often cause drowsiness, although there are prescription forms that are less sedating.

Mast cell stabilizer medications, like cromolyn, can actually prevent an allergic reaction. Now available over-the-counter in nasal spray form, these medicines are taken before exposure to an allergen. If you’re allergic to pollen or dander and you’re going to cut the grass or go to a home where

there’s a pet, you should consider using a mast cell stabilizer beforehand. For best results, start using up to one week in advance.

People with persistent, severe allergies have the option of immunotherapy. Available through your doctor, immunotherapy increases your body’s tolerance to the allergen through high and consistent exposure to that substance. Often lasting three years or more, the therapy involves one to two injections a week until normal exposure to the allergen no longer causes a reaction.

“Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to see what treatment or medication may be best for your symptoms and also to ensure there won’t be any drug interactions with other medicines you may be taking,” said Matunis. “He or she can also play detective to help you find the root cause of your allergic reactions.”

For more information on allergy relief or to find the location of the nearest Rite Aid pharmacist, go to www.riteaid.com.