



Drug FAQs for Members

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Allergy Relief Medicines: Update 2017

What causes allergies?

- Allergies occur when your body's immune system reacts to pollen, dust mites, or other allergens (things that cause allergy).
- During an allergic reaction, chemicals, such as histamine, are released in your body and cause symptoms such as sneezing, itching, and runny or stuffy nose.

How can I tell the difference between allergies and the common cold?

	Allergies	Colds
Causes	Pollen, dust mites, pet dander or other allergens	Viruses
Symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stuffy, itchy or runny nose; sneezing (typically occurs all at the same time). • No fever. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sore throat, cough, sneezing, stuffy or runny nose, headache, tiredness (may appear one at a time). • Fever is uncommon in adults (slight fever is possible), more likely in children.
Onset of Symptoms	Within minutes to hours	Up to several days
Duration of Symptoms	Weeks or longer	7 to 10 days

What can I do to help prevent allergy symptoms?

- Find out what triggers your allergy symptoms and avoid them, if possible.
 - Stay indoors when pollen counts are high. Check your newspaper or on-line at www.aaaai.org (National Allergy Bureau) for pollen information.
 - Keep your doors and windows in your home and car closed and use an air conditioner instead.
 - Keep your home thoroughly clean to reduce dust.
 - Shower after coming in from outdoors and wash your hair. Put on fresh clothing.
 - Wash hands to remove pollens, and do not rub your face or eyes with your hands.
 - For more information, visit kp.org/allergies.

Which allergy medications are available without a prescription?

- **Nose sprays:** Anti-inflammatory (corticosteroid) nasal sprays such as over-the-counter (OTC) fluticasone nasal spray (generic Flonase), OTC Nasacort Allergy 24HR, OTC Flonase Allergy Relief, and OTC Rhinocort Allergy reduce the inflammation in your nose and help to relieve sneezing, and an itchy, runny or stuffy nose. These medicines are the most effective at relieving allergic rhinitis symptoms.
 - Please note it can take up to a week or longer to see the full effect with corticosteroid nasal sprays.
 - The Sinus Rinse Kit and saline nasal spray (Ocean) can be helpful for washing thick mucus from the nose, clearing nasal passages, and relieving nasal dryness.
- **Antihistamines:** Loratadine (Claritin, Alavert), cetirizine (Zyrtec), fexofenadine (Allegra) and chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton) provide relief from sneezing, itching and runny nose.
- **Decongestants:** Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed) helps to relieve stuffy nose and ears.
 - Combination products that contain antihistamine and pseudoephedrine (loratadine-D, cetirizine-D, fexofenadine-D, and chlorpheniramine-D) are also available.
- **Eye drops:** Artificial Tears, ketotifen (Zaditor) or Opcon-A can help treat irritated, itchy eyes.

If you need help selecting an OTC allergy medication, please speak with your pharmacist. If your allergies are not controlled with OTC medications, please contact your physician.

How do the anti-inflammatory (corticosteroid) nasal sprays treat allergy symptoms?

- Nasal passages inside your nose can become irritated and swollen when your body reacts to allergens. This causes allergy symptoms like sneezing and itchy, runny or stuffy nose.
- Anti-inflammatory (corticosteroid) nasal sprays, such as OTC Nasacort Allergy 24HR, OTC Flonase Allergy Relief, and OTC Rhinocort Allergy are the most effective group of medicines used to treat allergy symptoms.
 - Anti-inflammatory (corticosteroid) nasal sprays reduce the inflammation in your nose and help to relieve sneezing, and an itchy, runny or stuffy nose. They provide non-drowsy relief with few side effects.
 - Anti-inflammatory (corticosteroid) nasal sprays should be used every day during the allergy season to give you the best results. Please note that when you first start using these sprays, it may take up to a week or longer to gain the full benefit.
- **Tips on how to use nasal spray:**
 - For best results when using an anti-inflammatory (corticosteroid) nasal spray, keep your head in a neutral (upright) position and point the spray toward the outer wall of your nose, sniff in gently but quickly as you spray.
 - It's easy to do this if you use your RIGHT hand to spray your LEFT nostril and your LEFT hand to spray your RIGHT nostril.

PRODUCTS	SYMPTOMS TREATED			
	THROAT itchy, scratchy	NOSE itchy, runny	NOSE stuffy, congested	EYES itchy, scratchy
Generic name (Brand Name)				
Antihistamines:				
• Chlorpheniramine tablets, liquid (Chlor-Trimeton)	✓	✓		✓
• Loratadine tablets, liquid (Claritin, Alavert)	✓	✓		✓
• Cetirizine tablets, liquid (Zyrtec)	✓	✓		✓
• Fexofenadine tablets, liquid (Allegra)	✓	✓		✓
Decongestants:				
• Pseudoephedrine tablets, liquid (Sudafed)*			✓	
Combinations: Antihistamine + Decongestant				
• Loratadine-D tablets (Claritin-D)*	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Cetirizine-D tablets (Zyrtec-D)*	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Fexofenadine-D (Allegra-D)*	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Chlorpheniramine-D tablets (SudoGest Sinus/Allergy)*	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Dimetapp Cold & Allergy liquid	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nose Sprays				
• Fluticasone propionate nose spray (Flonase Allergy Relief)		✓	✓	✓
• Triamcinolone acetonide nose spray (Nasacort Allergy 24HR)		✓	✓	✓
• Budesonide nose spray (Rhinocort Allergy)		✓	✓	✓
• Cromolyn nose spray (Nasal crom)		✓	✓	
• Saline nose spray (Ocean)			✓	
• Sinus Rinse Kit			✓	
Eye Drops				
• Artificial Tears Eye Drops				✓
• Ketotifen Eye Drops (Zaditor)				✓
• Naphazoline/Pheniramine Eye Drops (Opcon-A)				✓

Rx = prescription required * Please ask pharmacy staff for assistance