

MEDICAL TREATMENT OF ALLERGIC RHINITIS

The vast majority of allergy medications are over-the-counter and readily available. There are multiple different antihistamines as different people will respond differently to a given drug. For most people it is a trial and error circumstance to find the drug that may be the most effective. Antihistamine strength goes hand in hand with sedation.

- **RECOMMENDED ORDER OF ANTIHISTAMINE TRIALS:**

It is recommended to try non-sedating antihistamines and then move progressively towards the sedating ones to try to get more effectiveness if needed, as listed: Claritin, Zyrtec, Chlorpheniramine, Benadryl. One to two week periods when symptoms are active are adequate to assess whether the drug is effective. Prescription antihistamines are also available.

- **DECONGESTANTS:**

Are often helpful along with antihistamines. Some OTC products are combos meaning there is both an antihistamine and a decongestant in them. Otherwise adding Sudafed to your antihistamine can be beneficial. Decongestants are to be used with care. If one has high blood pressure or heart disease you should ask your family doctor if it's ok. They can also make it difficult to fall asleep if taken later at night.

- **NASAL STEROID SPRAYS: (Flonase, Nasonex, Rhinocort, etc.)**

Nasal steroid sprays are often times the first line of therapy, but they don't always work. I tend to recommend at least a 4 week trial of a given nasal steroid spray to be used 2 puffs nasally, daily either in the morning or in the evening. Dust allergy sufferers are probably better served in the evening. Everyone else is better served in the morning.

- **ANTI-HISTAMINE NASAL SPRAY: (Patanase, Astelin, Astepro)**

A non-steroid nasal spray can be used on a prn basis, 2 puffs nasally 2 times daily as needed. Using it at the same time as a nasal steroid spray can increase the incidence of nasal bleeding so care has to be taken. It doesn't really have any other major risks so it is a safe item to try.

- **IMMUNOTHERAPY:**

Immunotherapy sometimes is the fallback treatment if medical therapy fails and symptoms remain intolerable and avoidance is impractical. It is a long-term commitment but often times pays great dividends to those who are really suffering significantly with their allergies.

