

# Allergy Medicines

## What are allergy medicines?

There are many nonprescription medicines that may help relieve some of the symptoms of an allergy. Allergy symptoms start when you react to something in the home or environment that your body sees as foreign. Symptoms may include sneezing, a stuffy or runny nose, watery eyes, or skin reactions. Allergy symptoms can go away in a few minutes without treatment, or they may last for several days.

Many nonprescription allergy medicines contain more than 1 ingredient to treat more than 1 symptom. Read the labels and buy products that have only the ingredients that you need. If you are not sure which medicine is best for your symptoms, ask your pharmacist.

## How do they work?

The 2 main types of allergy medicines are decongestants and antihistamines.

- **Decongestants** reduce swelling in your nose and sinuses. They may also lessen the amount of mucus made by your nose. If you use decongestant sprays more often than directed by your provider or the package instructions, your stuffy nose may get worse.
- **Antihistamines** block the effect of histamine. Histamine is a chemical your body makes when you have an allergic reaction. Antihistamines are most often used to treat itchy or watery eyes or a stuffy or runny nose caused by an allergy.

## What else do I need to know about this medicine?

- Follow the directions that come with your medicine, including information about food or alcohol. Make sure you know how and when to take your medicine. Do not take more or less than you are supposed to take.
- Try to get all of your medicine at the same place. Your pharmacist can help make sure that all of your medicines are safe to take together.
- Keep a list of your medicines with you. List all of the prescription medicines, nonprescription medicines, supplements, natural remedies, and vitamins that you take. Tell all healthcare providers who treat you about all of the products you are taking.
- Many medicines have side effects. A side effect is a symptom or problem that is caused by the medicine. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist what side effects the medicine may cause and what you should do if you have side effects.

If you have any questions, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information. Be sure to keep all appointments for provider visits or tests.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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