

Allergy & Asthma Center

of Southern Oregon, PC

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ANTI-HISTAMINES & DECONGESTANTS INFORMATION SHEET

“SECOND GENERATION” (NEWER, NON-SEDATING) ANTI-HISTAMINES”

Clarinet, Zyrtec, Allegra, Claritin, Soltera etc. are used to treat the same symptoms as the classic antihistamines. Since these antihistamines generally cannot cross from the blood into the brain, they usually do not cause much sedation. These medications also do not generally cause dry mouth or difficulty urinating. They should not worsen asthma and sometimes may even improve asthma.

“CLASSIC” (OLDER) ANTI-HISTAMINES

Benadryl (diphenhydramine), Atarax (hydroxazine HCL), Clortrimeton (chlorpheniramine), Tavist, etc. are used to relieve/prevent allergy symptoms (e.g., itching, hives, runny nose, etc.). Generally these should be taken **AT BEDTIME** and **NOT** used during daytime hours since these antihistamines can cause sleepiness and poor concentration. **DO NOT USE THESE BEFORE DRIVING, USING MACHINERY OR ENGAGING IN WORK REQUIRING YOU TO BE ALERT.** Alcohol, sleeping pills, and tranquilizers can worsen this problem, so their intake should be avoided while on antihistamines. “Classic” antihistamines can also cause irritability, nightmares, difficulty urinating and dry mouth. Tell your doctor if any of these side effects occur. These medications should not generally worsen asthma and can be used safely by asthmatics.

“H2 BLOCKER-ANTI-HISTAMINES”

Zantac, Tagamet, Pepcid etc. block histamine receptors of a different type than those blocked by “H1-antihistamines” (such as those discussed above). They were developed to treat stomach/duodenal ulcers. Allergists use them together with H1-antihistamines to give added therapeutic effect against itching, hives, angioedema (swelling), etc. They do not cause sleepiness and rarely cause any side effects.

ORAL DECONGESTANTS

Sudafed (pseudoephedrine) medications prevent/relieve nasal stuffiness (“congestion”). They have little effect on itching or other allergy symptoms. These medications can cause irritability, nervousness, tremors, and poor sleep. These side effects will usually decrease over several days. If they continue or if you have high blood pressure or develop difficulty urinating, notify the doctor.

DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK QUESTIONS!!

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