

Eye on Health

Keeping An Eye On Allergic Eye Symptoms

(NAPSA)—It's often said that April showers bring May flowers. Unfortunately, they also bring allergens such as pollens from trees, sprouting grasses and ragweed, which have a tendency to cause seasonal allergies.

According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, each year more than 50 million Americans suffer from some sort of allergy. One of the areas often affected by allergies are the eyes. People who suffer from ocular allergies may experience symptoms such as itchy, red and/or watery eyes.

According to Dr. Kimberlee Curnyn, pediatric ophthalmologist in private practice in Arlington Heights, Illinois, allergy sufferers should be vigilant in addressing problems they may have during allergy season with their physician and seek medical attention at the onset of their symptoms. In addition, Dr. Curnyn offers the following advice:

- Being aware of environmental triggers that may cause ocular allergies. You may think your symptoms are a result of the common cold, but they may be a result of allergies brought on by pollen, pet dander or even food.

- Get a dilated eye exam—especially if there's a family history of eye problems and this is especially true for children.

“If you, or someone in your family, is constantly rubbing their eyes, if the eyes appear watery or if the person complains about ‘itchy’ or ‘scratchy’ eyes, don’t ignore the

problem,” says Dr. Curnyn. “Fortunately, there are preventative measures your doctor can recommend for ocular allergies, including preventative eye drops.”

Dr. Curnyn offers the following advice for people who regularly experience allergies during allergy season:

- **Change environment**—Remove or reduce allergy-inducing factors such as pet hair, dust mites or pollen. As long as these troublemakers are around, those with allergies will experience symptoms.

- **Clean up your act**—Wash your hands to remove the problem-causing antigens and flush your eyes with an artificial tears product, such as GenTeal. Avoid eye drops that solely constrict the blood vessels in the eye, masking the underlying problem. Take showers before bedtime, apply cold compresses to the eyes and keep your hands away from your eyes to avoid introducing germs and triggering more swelling in the eyes

- **See your doctor**—If problems persist, seek professional help. Don't be shy about asking your primary-care physician for a referral to an ophthalmologist or optometrist. They may prescribe a preventative medication, such as Zaditor (ketotifen fumarate ophthalmic solution, 0.025%), which can temporarily prevent itching of the eye due to exposure to allergens such as pollen, pollution, dust or animal dander.

For more information on eye drops, visit www.us.novartisophthalmics.com.

Note to Editors: *Zaditor™ Safety Information*

Contraindications: Zaditor is contraindicated in persons with a known hypersensitivity to any component of this product.

Warnings: For topical ophthalmic use only. Not for injection or oral use.

Precautions: To prevent contaminating the dropper tip and solution, care should be taken not to touch the eyelids or surrounding areas with the dropper tip of the bottle. Keep the bottle tightly closed when not in use. Patients should be advised not to wear a contact lens if their eye is red. Zaditor should not be used to treat contact lens related irritation. The preservative in Zaditor, benzalkonium chloride, may be absorbed by soft contact lenses. Patients who wear soft contact lenses and whose eyes are not red, should be instructed to wait at least ten minutes after instilling Zaditor before they insert their contact lenses.