

SEE YOUR DOCTOR

The Dangers Of Getting The Wrong Allergy Medication: Expert Panel Urges Patients To Consult Physicians First

(NAPSA)—Are you one of the nearly 40 million Americans who suffer from allergy symptoms such as itchy, watery, red eyes, sneezing and runny nose, particularly in the spring and fall? If so,



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allergy and immunology experts warn against running out to your local drug-store to buy an over-the-counter antihistamine that may make you drowsy. Instead, physicians who treat allergy symptoms hope that allergy sufferers will seek professional medical advice to get a non-sedating and non-impairing medication.

New panel recommendations, urging patients to seek medical advice and use non-impairing and non-sedating medications to treat seasonal allergies, were recently published in *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*. Furthermore, the panel acknowledges that if left untreated or misdiagnosed, allergy symptoms can exacerbate or lead to more serious respiratory illnesses, such as sinusitis or asthma.

“Patients seeking allergy relief from antihistamines available in drug stores may not realize that many cause drowsiness, can disrupt sleep patterns, and can impair patients while driving,” said Thomas Casale, M.D., Chief, Division of Allergy/Immunology, and Director of Clinical Research at Creighton University Medical School. “The real danger is that people suffering from allergy symptoms often cannot detect impairment caused by allergies,

and are usually not aware that impairment caused by allergies can be exacerbated when treated with a sedating antihistamine.”

According to a recent survey, only 50 percent of allergy sufferers consider the disease to be a serious medical condition and nearly two-thirds did not see an allergist or other doctor the last time their symptoms occurred. Overall, nearly half of allergy sufferers choose to self-medicate with over-the-counter antihistamines sold in drug stores. Many of these older medications have been shown to cause undesirable side effects, including sedation and impairment, a decrease in mental or physical ability such as the ability to drive a car or operate machinery. Results from a recent study have shown that patients are 1.5 times more likely to have occupational injuries while using an antihistamine with sedating properties. Although patients may be able to detect sedation or drowsiness, they are less successful detecting impairment.

“These recommendations reinforce the need for patients to avoid self-treating allergy symptoms without appropriate consultation with a healthcare provider. Self-treatment with over-the-counter medications may lead to unwanted side effects such as sedation and impairment, and some remedies may actually worsen the condition,” said Dr. Casale.

If you suffer from allergies, talk to your doctor about safe and effective, non-sedating and non-impairing treatments for seasonal allergies. For more information, visit www.smartaboutallergies.com.