

June News

Seasonal Allergies - What can you do about them in 2011?

More than 1 in 6 Canadians suffer from seasonal allergies each year. Depending on the specific type of allergen, symptoms for many can last from weeks to months between early spring and late fall.

What is an allergy?

An allergy is an over-reaction of your immune system to common substances. When the body encounters an "allergen", the immune system releases IgE which in turn releases many chemicals (i.e. histamine) into the bloodstream. These chemicals then lead to inflammation and allergy symptoms. These symptoms are often referred to as seasonal allergies, allergic rhinitis or hay fever.

Why are some years worse than others for allergy symptoms?

Depending on the amount and type of pollen released each year, allergy symptoms can seem better or worse. Moist years with plenty of rain tend to keep allergy symptoms low, while in hot and dry years allergy symptoms can be worse. Environment Canada is predicting a hotter and drier summer this year, therefore **allergy symptoms may be at their worst in 2011.**



What are the symptoms of seasonal allergies?

Common symptoms of allergies are:

- Itchy, runny eyes
- Stuffy, runny nose
- Sneezing
- Mouth breathing
- Headaches

How can you prevent seasonal allergy symptoms?

Environmental control can help to keep allergy symptoms at bay. The following tips can help to ward off seasonal allergies:

- Keep windows and doors closed
- Monitor pollen counts and avoid prolonged outdoor exposure when they are high.
- Do not dry clothes outdoors
- Shower or bathe immediately after outdoor activity

Are there any non-prescription treatments?

Oral anti-histamine medications are the most widely used treatment for mild to moderate allergy symptoms.

There are two classes of antihistamines:

- Older, 1st generation, antihistamines such as Benadryl (diphenhydramine)
- Newer, 2nd generation, antihistamines such as Reactine (cetirazine), Aerius (loratidine), and Claratin (desloratidine)

1st generation anti-histamines have many side effects such as

drowsiness and dry mouth. Additionally, these medications have many interactions with other medications and can't be taken if you have glaucoma or prostate problems.

Since the introduction of the **2nd generation anti-histamines** to the market, older anti-histamines are no longer used for the daily prevention of seasonal allergies. These newer medications are very well tolerated, with most people experiencing little or no side effects while taking them. Additionally, there aren't as many drug interactions and they are safe to take if you have glaucoma or prostate problems.

Anti-histamines (2nd generation) must be taken once daily on a daily basis for as long as a person requires during their allergy season. If one anti-histamine isn't working, often switching to another anti-histamine can result in resolution of symptoms.

Ask your pharmacist today for help selecting the right treatment for your allergies!

Prescription Therapies

For moderate-severe allergy symptoms, or for those unresolved with over the counter therapies, a prescription medication may be required.

See your doctor as soon as possible if your allergy symptoms are out of control.

Rx Center— DIN's and NPN's: what are they?

What is a DIN?

A Drug Identification Number or DIN is an eight digit number assigned to a drug product before it can be marketed in Canada. The Health Canada assigned DIN uniquely identifies each drug on the market in Canada.

Do only prescription drugs have DIN's?

No, all Health Canada approved drugs including over-the-counter medications have been assigned a DIN.

What is the DIN used for?

A DIN on the medication label lets the consumer know that Health Canada has approved the formulation, labeling, and instructions for use. It is illegal to sell a drug product without a DIN number.

A DIN uniquely identifies the following product characteristics: manufacturer; product name; active ingredient(s); strength(s) of active

ingredient(s); pharmaceutical form; route of administration.

Additionally, DIN numbers are used by drug insurance companies in order to identify whether or not a drug is covered.

Do Vitamins have DIN's?

No. However as of January 1st, 2004 these products are required to have other types of identification numbers. Natural health products are assigned either an eight digit natural product number (NPN) or a homeopathic medicine number (DIN-HM).

The process of reviewing and approving all natural health products in Canada is still not complete. Therefore, products which have been initially assessed by Health Canada for safety, quality and efficacy have been given a temporary exemption number which allows them to legally be sold until they are assigned a permanent NPN or DIN-HM. The exemption number is in the form of EN-XXXXXX.

What are the NPN and DIN-HM used for?

These numbers assure the consumer that the product has been approved for sale by Health Canada. They also uniquely identify the same characteristics of the product as the DIN does for drug products.

Why are these numbers important to you?

Health Canada's approval means that these products have been tested for the following: safety, efficacy and manufacturing standards. Additionally, these products are continuously monitored for adverse effects that occur while they are on the market.

Many products on the internet do not have DIN's, NPN's, DIN-HM's or EN numbers. This means that they have not been approved by Health Canada and are not evaluated for safety.

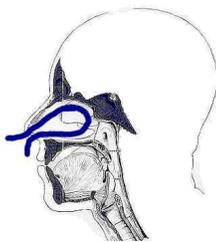
To search an individual product visit www.hs-sc.gc.ca

OTC Spotlight— Sinus Rinse Kits

What is a sinus rinse?

A saline sinus rinse is the practice of clearing nasal passages using a salt solution. Solution is sprayed or poured into one nostril until it pours out the other nostril. All of the sinus and nasal cavities are connected allowing this process to occur.

There are a couple of different devices that can be used to perform this rinse including a nettie pot (looks like a teapot) or a spray bottle. There are also disposable and re-usable products on today's market.



What should a nasal rinse be used for?

- To remove pollens and other allergens from the nasal cavities
- To moisturize in dry climates or during dry winter months
- To remove excess mucous during periods of congestion (i.e. when you have a cold)
- To ease symptoms of chronic sinusitis
- To reduce cough symptoms due to post nasal drip
- To prevent colds and flu

How does the rinse work?

The nose acts as a filter. The nasal passages are lined with thin hair and mucous that filter the air we breathe and remove dust and pollen from the

air and then moving it into the stomach where most of it is destroyed. The mucous layer also prevents viruses and bacteria from penetrating the nasal lining leading to infection.

The saline rinse works to carry some of these impurities out of the body. It also helps to maintain the healthy functioning of the protective mucous layer. If mucous in the nose becomes too thick, too dry or too runny, it is easier for viruses and bacteria to penetrate the nasal lining and cause a cold.

These rinses can be used on a daily basis once to twice daily to prevent chronic sinusitis. They can also be used as needed during allergy season to relieve allergy symptoms.

Ask your pharmacist if a rinse kit is right for you!

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