

Your Question Answered

Your pharmacist is the best source of information on how to get the most from your medicines. Here is one popular query from our reader.

Q: What can I take to treat a runny, stuffy nose and sinus?

A: There are a variety of over-the-counter (OTC) products that may be used for a runny or stuffy nose and sinus drainage. The two primary types of these medications include antihistamines and oral decongestants.

Antihistamines may be used to treat "runny nose" symptoms and commonly are found in allergy or cough and cold products. They work by blocking histamine, a chemical that is released in the body. Histamine can cause itchy, watery eyes, runny nose, and other symptoms commonly seen other types of allergies. The most common side effect of antihistamines is drowsiness.

Certain medications may interact with antihistamines to produce a more sedating effect. These include, but are not limited to alcohol and central nervous system depressants (for example, sleep aids and medications used to treat anxiety).



In addition, antihistamines should be used with caution by persons living with certain medical conditions, including enlarged prostate, urinary problems, and glaucoma. If you have a medical condition, or currently are taking other medications, please consult your family doctor before starting therapy with antihistamines.

Decongestants are used to help treat a stuffy or "plugged-up" nose. Decongestants help by reducing swollen mucous membranes and nasal congestion, making it easier to breathe. However, these products should be used with caution by certain persons. Please consult your physician before taking any OTC medication containing decongestants if you have diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, glaucoma, enlarged prostate, or overactive thyroid.

As a precaution, always consult your physician before starting any medication. **OH!**