

Nasal Allergy: Over-the-Counter Medicines



The table below lists the most common over-the-counter (OTC) medicines for nasal allergies. Some are pills. Some are liquids. And some are nasal sprays. It's important to check with your healthcare provider or pharmacist before taking these medicines, even though they're available without a prescription. Bring a list of your current medicines with you. Then the pharmacist can review it and check for possible medicine interactions. Having your medicine information will allow the pharmacist to advise a safe OTC nasal allergy medicine. Always follow the instructions on the package labels.

Type of medicine	Examples of medicines	Description of medicine
Antihistamines	• diphenhydramine	
	• loratadine	
	• cetirizine	• Stops the release of histamine, a substance in the body that causes many allergy symptoms.
	• fexofenadine	
	• levocetirizine	• Helps prevent sneezing, runny nose, and itchy and watery eyes.
	• desloratidine	• Some antihistamines can cause drowsiness.
	• olopatadine (nasal)	
Corticosteroid nasal sprays	• azelastine (nasal)	
	• fluticasone	
	• triamcinolone	• Reduces inflammation and swelling.
	• budesonide	• Relieves itching and sneezing.
	• beclomethasone	• Helps decrease mucus and relieve postnasal drip when taken daily.
Decongestants	• flunisolide	
	• oxymetazoline	• Reduce swelling of nasal passages and relieve sinus pressure.
	• pseudoephedrine	• Overuse of decongestant nasal sprays can make symptoms worse.
Mast cell stabilizers		• If you have high blood pressure, talk with your healthcare provider before using a decongestant.
	• ketotifen	• Help prevent cells from releasing histamine.
	• cromolyn	• Prevent and relieve sneezing, itchiness, and runny nose.
Saline sprays, rinses, and gels		• Provide lubrication or moisture to nasal passages. These can be used as often as needed.
	nasal saline spray	• Help soothe irritated nasal passages. Loosens thick mucus.

Note

Talk with your healthcare provider or pharmacist about the possible side effects and medicine or food interactions of any medicine you take.

How to use nasal spray

Nasal sprays must be used the right way to work. Be sure to do the following:

- Blow your nose to clear your nostrils.
- Gently shake the bottle. Then remove the cap.
- With your right hand, carefully insert the tip of the bottle into your left nostril. Point the tip toward your ear and not the center of the nose.
- While gently breathing in through your nose, press down once on the pump to release the spray.
- Breathe out through your mouth.
- With your left hand, repeat the steps for your right nostril.

You don't need to tilt your head back or sniff strongly when taking a nasal spray. If a little drips out after use or you sneeze, that's OK. Try not to blow your nose or sneeze right after using the spray.

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