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Allergy season 2015: Consult your physician on side effects of OTC medication

(HARRISBURG, PA.) Pennsylvania is thawing out after a cold and snowy winter – but the beginning of spring also means allergy season is on its way. With warmer weather coming, pollen and mold spores are beginning to trigger more allergies across the Commonwealth. In fact, [the Weather Channel](#) says [science backs up the claim that 2015 could see the worst allergy season ever](#).

While the traditional symptoms of a runny nose and scratchy eyes often lead patients to over-the-counter (OTC) medications for relief, many of these products can cause side effects including excessive drowsiness and increased blood pressure. It's important for patients to consult their family physician before use, especially if prescription drugs are currently being used.

“Some over-the-counter medications work fine,” said Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians Board Chair Douglas Spotts, MD. “However, for some patients, the side effects can be problematic. Many allergy sufferers develop repeated sinus infections, ear infections, and headaches – and some are on prescriptions that may present adverse interactions. It's always best for you to see your doctor as soon as allergy symptoms appear.”

Further, some remedies such as intranasal corticosteroids and new histamine blockers require a prescription.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 10 million visits to physician offices are made in the United States every year where the primary diagnosis is allergic rhinitis (allergic inflammation).

The Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians and its Foundation supports its members (including nearly 80 percent of Pennsylvania family physicians) through advocacy and education to ensure a patient-centered medical home for every Pennsylvanian. The Academy and its Foundation are the leading influential resource among family physicians and physicians in training in Pennsylvania; the primary voice on health care issues with state legislative and administrative branches of government, media and professional health organizations; and the leader on health care issues in the community.

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