

ter and experience reduction of congestion, redness, and mucus when decongestants are used. Popular decongestants in pill form are Claritin D, Zyrtec D, and Allegra D. These are typically behind the pharmacy counter. Decongestant medications can also work as combination allergy drugs to treat multiple allergy symptoms. Afrin nasal spray and Visine eye drops can be found over-the-counter to help with nasal and eye itchiness and irritation.

Steroids

Another option to treat allergy symptoms is for doctors to prescribe steroids. Steroid drugs must be monitored carefully by doctors and pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians should be fully versed in the use of steroids for allergy symptoms. Some nasal steroid treatment drugs include Flonase, Nasonex and Omnaris. Inhaled steroids include Flovent Diskus, Flovent HFA and Qvar to treat asthma. Inhaled steroids like Advair and Symbicort work in combination with another medication to treat asthma symptoms. An example of an oral steroid is prednisone, while dexamethasone is a type of steroid eye drop.

Steroid drugs may have more side effects than other allergy medications. The benefit to using them is that they reduce swelling and inflammation. On the contrary, using these drugs on a long-term basis may result in potentially serious side effects. Using steroids as a short-term fix has side effects that can include weight gain, fluid retention and high blood pressure. Using steroids long-term may lead to more serious side effects like growth suppression, diabetes, eye cataracts, osteoporosis and muscle weakness.

Bronchodilators

Many patients who suffer from allergies, asthma and allergic asthma use bronchodilators. Bronchodilators are available with a prescription. There are two types of bronchodilators – long and short acting forms. Some examples of short-acting bronchodilators are albuterol, Xopenex and Combivent. These short-acting substances work by opening the airways and acting as a “rescue” measure once an asthma attack has already begun. Pharmacy technicians and pharmacists should advise patients to resort to more long-acting medications if they need to use an inhaler more than twice a week. Long-acting drugs include Advair and Symbicort. It should be noted that overuse of inhalers can cause a rapid heartbeat and high blood pressure so caution should be practiced when using these drugs. Bronchodilators like Primatine Mist have been taken off the market due to their use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in the inhalant. The pill form of Primatene is still available OTC along with Bronkaid pills used to treat asthma attacks. Patients should not wait until they need rescue measures to calm their asthma. Preventative medica-

tions are better to use because they prevent the patient from ever getting to the point of having an asthma attack and needing a rescue inhaler.

Mast Cell Stabilizers and Anti-Leukotrienes

Two other options to treat asthma and allergies are mast cell stabilizers and leukotriene modifiers. Mast cell stabilizers stop the release of histamine from the body's mast cells that make and store histamine. When these drugs are taken they also provide anti-inflammatory properties in addition to the blocking of histamine. Examples of mast cell stabilizers are Tilade and Alamast. Leukotriene modifiers can also be used to treat nasal allergies and asthma. Leukotriene modifiers may be prescribed with other medications and are only available with a prescription. The medication is manufactured in forms including pills, chewable pills and oral granules. It works by blocking the body's natural response of

leukotriene release. Examples of these types of medications are Singulair, Accolate and Zflo. According to Mayo Clinic.com, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has warned that some people taking leukotriene-blocking medications may possibly be affected with psychological symptoms, such as irritability, anxiousness, insomnia, hallucinations, aggression, depression and possible suicidal thinking or behavior. Patients experiencing worsening psychological symptoms should consult with their physician or mental health care provider about the continued use of these medications.

Allergy Shots

One last method used to treat allergies is allergy shots. They are also known as immunotherapy and are generally for people who suffer from allergies for more than three months out of a given year.

Besides typical allergies, there is also a condition called allergic asthma. According to WebMD, allergic asthma is a type of asthma that is triggered by an allergy. Examples of allergy triggers are pollen, mold spores, dirt, pet hair and dander, as well as household cleaners and sprays. Bronchitis, sinus infections and colds can start out as one type of ailment and progress to allergic asthma. WebMD also reports that roughly 20 million Americans suffer from allergic asthma. Patients who already suffer from asthma should be extra careful so more serious complications do not present themselves. Pharmacy technicians must also be aware that allergies can become life-threatening. According to WebMD, anaphylaxis is a sudden and severe allergic reaction that happens when a patient is exposed to a substance that that body was otherwise sensitized to during a previous exposure. Foods like peanuts, almonds, walnuts, hazel, brazil and cashew nuts can cause severe allergic reactions if patients are allergic to these nuts. Other foods such as shellfish, shrimp, lobster, dairy products, and eggs

