



***From the Office of  
Maria M. Doucet, M.D.***

## **OVER THE COUNTER MEDICATIONS**

There are many over the counter medications that can be used as a first line of treatment for allergy symptoms and colds. Sometimes, it can be confusing when trying to decide which medications will treat your symptoms. This can serve as a general guide:

**Nasal Saline sprays or sinus irrigation systems:** In general, this is almost always helpful! A saline spray is non medicated and will not interfere with other medications that you may be taking. It acts as a topical decongestant and, in addition, physically dilutes secretions. By keeping the secretions thinner and washing out thick mucous, it is easier for your body to clear out any foreign antigens or bacteria.

**Antihistamines:** These medications are used to treat sneezing, itching and nasal congestion and runny nose. This will treat the symptoms of allergies but to be most affective, they need to be used for more than just a single dose. If your allergies are significant, symptoms often return once the medication is stopped. If you have persistent allergy symptoms, despite medical management, please make an appointment to see Dr. Doucet. We may be able to identify the cause of your allergies and can educate you on the most effective treatment of the problem instead of just treating the symptoms.

**Decongestant:** Decongestants are used for the short term management of nasal swelling, nasal pressure and nasal congestion. Do not use a decongestant without the advice of your doctor if you have a heart condition or are taking blood pressure medications. Decongestants can be used to treat some of the symptoms of allergies and sinus infections. If you feel that you require a decongestant for more than a week, please let your physician know or call Dr. Doucet for an appointment. You may need a different treatment.

**Expectorant / Guaifenesin:** A mucus thinner is often helpful as one of the medications to treat a cold , sinus infection, or a cough. By keeping the mucus thinner, it moves and clears easier from your body. This medication is used if the mucus in your nose or chest becomes very thick and hard to clear.

Please remember, if your symptoms last more than a week you should seek medical care. If you try over the counter medications and your symptoms do not improve or get worse, please call to make an appointment to see Dr. Doucet.

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