

Newsflash

Issue 2017.04

Generic Releases

The following brand drugs have lost their patents:

Drug	Condition	Date
Zyflo CR	Asthma	Mar 17
Alkeran	Multiple Myeloma	Mar 22
Suprax Suspension	Bacteria Infection	Feb 06
Ella	Prevent Pregnancy	Feb 13
Xyrem	Cataplexy	Jan 17
Topicort Spray	Inflammation	Jan 20
Ampyra	Multiple Sclerosis	Jan 23
Namzaric	Dementia	Jan 27

Q & A

Q: Seasonal allergies are making me miserable. Can pills under the tongue – instead of shots – help?

A: Possibly. The prescription treatment sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT) involves placing purified extracts (usually in dissolvable tablets) of allergens that you react to under your tongue. Over weeks you build up a tolerance to the allergens. Eventually your reactions should greatly diminish. SLIT is worth considering if you have frequent, bothersome allergy symptoms that aren't eased by antihistamines and steroid nasal sprays, and you don't want to use traditional immunotherapy, which is administered by injection. SLIT is not approved for those over age 65 and carries warnings about potential severe allergic reactions.

Previous issues of Newsflash can be viewed under “PBM Resources>Newsletters>Clinical” at: www.ProCareRx.com

Allergy-Proofing: What Works, What Doesn't

The right home products, used the right way, help during pollen season and beyond.

The simplest way to keep allergy symptoms at bay? Avoid exposure to the substances that provoke your sneezing, wheezing, and itchiness. But how? We looked at the research, spoke to leading experts, and reviewed our product tests to determine what can help and what to skip.

WASHING LINENS IN HOT WATER. Researchers have found that washing bedding in very hot water (in some studies, above 130° F) will kill dust mites – ubiquitous, microscopic creatures that may provoke allergy symptoms. A hot water wash will also reduce animal dander (tiny skin flecks), another common allergen. But to avoid scalding, two leading organizations recommend laundering linens at 120° F. Hotter water will kill only a few extra mites. Many drown in the wash anyway and a cycle in a hot dryer should do the rest. But weekly laundering is a must.

COVERING YOUR BEDDING. Swathing mattresses box springs and pillows in allergen-impermeable covers can entrap dust mites and animal dander as long as you use covers that are made from woven fabrics, according to research studies. Non-woven covers are less durable and won't protect you from dust mites long-term. Plus, their dimpled surface can allow a variety of allergens to collect there. So before you buy, check product labels for a fabric pore size (the size of openings in the weave) no greater than 66 micrometers or microns, and for words such as “woven fabric.”

VACUUMING WITH A HEPA FILTER. Our tests found that vacuums with regular filters sucked up similar amounts of dander and dust as those with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters. And some, but not all, were just as good as those with HEPA filters as keeping small particles from escaping from the vacuum and blowing back into the air. If you're the allergy sufferer, have someone else vacuum. And avoid bagless vacuums, which can stir up dust when you're emptying the bin.

RUNNING THE DEHUMIDIFIER. Keeping your home's humidity to 30% to 50% constant basis minimizes the growth of moisture-loving dust mites and mold. Because dehumidifiers should generally be used only in basements (they generate a lot of heat), a better strategy is running a properly sized air conditioner.

PURIFYING THE AIR. Air purifiers are available in two configurations: portable models you can move from room to room and whole-house air filters, which can be used only in homes with forced-air heating and/or cooling. Typically, those are thin filters used in place of regular furnace or central air filters. Thicker models that may require modification of your heating and/or cooling system are also available.

Both room and whole-house purifiers can help filter out dust and pollen, but overall our tests found that the thin furnace filters were less effective. Skip ionizing air cleaners, which can worsen asthma and make you less able to fight respiratory infections.



The following **New Drugs** were recently approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration and added to ProCare Rx's National formulary. Each drug will be reviewed at the next ProCare Rx's P&T Committee meeting.

Brand Name	Dose Form	FDA Approved Indication
Bavencio (avelumab)	Injection	Treatment for merkel cell carcinoma
Dupixent (dupilumab)	Injection	Treatment for atopic dermatitis
Ocrevus (ocrelizumab)	Injection	Treatment for multiple sclerosis
Symproic (naldemedine)	Tablet	Treatment for opioid-induced constipation
Xadago (safinamide)	Tablet	Treatment for Parkinson's disease
Zejula (niraparib)	Capsules	Treatment for ovarian cancer

Did you know?

April is Distracted Driving Month

Don't touch that keypad! Dialing a cell phone while driving more than doubles an adult's risk of crashing or almost crashing. And for newly licensed teens, it increases the odds eightfold, according to a new study, which used cameras to look at the activities that cause drivers to take their eyes off the road. If you need to answer a call, pull over and stop the car first. Even better, turn off the phone when you drive.

More reasons not to text and drive! We all know it's dangerous to text while behind the wheel, but a Wayne State University study has found that older drivers may have a higher risk of accidents while texting. Using driving simulators, researchers tested 50 texters, 18 to 59. Of those volunteers who said they were skilled texters, all who were older than 45 veered into other lanes of traffic while simulating a text-and-drive task. Overall, the older the volunteer, the more likely he or she was to make lane excursions.

Asleep at the Wheel? If you feel drowsy while driving, you're not alone – especially if you work late. New research found that almost 40 percent of night-shift workers were in near-collisions while driving the morning after work. What to do: Change drivers if you can. Otherwise, pull over somewhere safe and nap or grab coffee. But note: It can take up to an hour for caffeine's effects to fully take hold.

Got Heartburn? The best treatment for you.

Remember "Plop, plop, fizz, fizz, oh what a relief it is"? Well, heartburn drugs have changed a lot since that TV jingle became popular. Americans spend approximately \$6 billion on the acid-reflux drug *Nexium* each year, making it a top-selling branded prescription medication. But other drugs work just as well and cost less. Here's how to treat heartburn right.

Get the right drug. Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) are often the first thing doctors give patients for heartburn. But up to 70% of people taking the drugs, such as esomeprazole (*Nexium*) and omeprazole (*Prilosec* and generic), might not need such strong medication, research has found.

Some people think these drugs provide immediate relief, but they can take one to four days to work and should be taken for at least two weeks or longer if your doctor recommends. PPIs aren't meant to treat run-of-the-mill heartburn, but rather gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), when heartburn occurs twice a week or more for weeks or months. If your symptoms strike less often, use a fast-acting over-the-counter antacid like *Maalox*, *Mylanta*, *Rolaids*, or *Tums*. Or try an over-the-counter H2 blocker, such as famotidine (*Pepcid AC*) or ranitidine (*Zantac 75*). They tend to cause fewer side effects and are typically cheaper than PPIs.

Know the risks. PPIs are linked to pneumonia and *C. difficile*, an infection that can cause disabling diarrhea, as well as bone fractures and a vitamin B12 deficiency, which can lead to anemia and even dementia.

Ease off the drugs gradually. Quitting heartburn drugs can be difficult because you might get rebound symptoms. They cause your stomach to produce less acid, and stopping suddenly can cause it to overproduce acid. If you're taking a PPI or H2 blocker once a day, ask your doctor about cutting back perhaps to every other day, then every few days.

Check for other diseases. Self-medicating with over-the-counter heartburn drugs can mask underlying health problems. Frequent burning or pain in the upper abdomen or chest can signal an ulcer or even esophageal cancer. Some people mistake pain from gallstones or heart disease for heartburn. So before starting any heartburn drugs see a doctor to rule out other health issues.

Make lifestyle changes. A number of steps can help:

- Raise the head of your bed 6 to 8 inches to prevent acid from traveling back into your esophagus
- Lose weight. Extra pounds puts pressure on the abdomen, pushing stomach contents into the esophagus
- Don't eat for 2 to 3 hours before bedtime, and avoid having large, fatty meals in general.
- Track which foods cause symptoms and cut back on them.