

Appropriate Treatment of Allergic Rhinitis

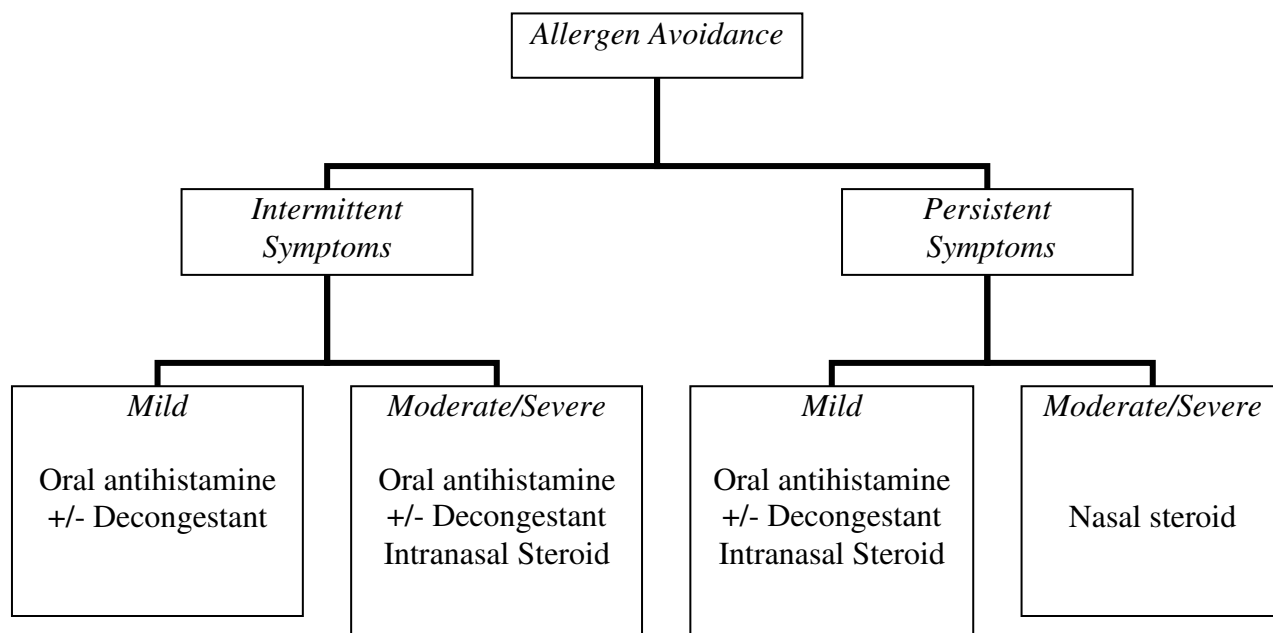
Background

Allergic rhinitis is the sixth most common medical condition in the United States, affecting approximately 40 million people.

Key Treatment Points¹⁻⁴

- ❖ Antihistamines are the mainstay of treatment, are best initiated PRIOR to symptom onset and may require up to 4 weeks for full benefit if started after symptoms have begun
- ❖ Most studies support the use of non-sedating antihistamines as first-line agents
 - ❖ *OTC loratadine is covered by Medicaid with a written prescription for patients <20 years of age (older patients must have a documented failure with two sedating antihistamines)*
 - ❖ Many patients are able to tolerate older agents (Chlor-Trimeton®, Tavist®) and some data exists to support their equivalence or even superiority to newer agents
- ❖ Leukotriene inhibitors (i.e. Singulair®) have been shown to be **as effective as** antihistamines but **less effective** than nasal steroids
 - ❖ Singulair® may be a better option for patients with both allergic rhinitis and asthma
- ❖ Intranasal antihistamines (i.e. Astelin®) are more expensive and offer no therapeutic benefit over oral antihistamines
- ❖ Nasal steroids are costly agents that should be reserved for those who fail other treatments
 - ❖ Of note, Flonase® (nasal fluticasone) is now available in generic form

Stepwise Treatment Algorithm⁵



*Idaho Drug Utilization Review Program
Educational Leaflet*

Comparison of Allergic Rhinitis Treatment Options⁶

Class	Medication	Dosing Interval	Monthly cost
Sedating Antihistamines (1 st generation)	Diphenhydramine (Benadryl [®])	3-4 times daily	\$8.99*
	Clemastine (Tavist [®])	Twice daily	\$12.99*
	Chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton [®])	Twice daily	\$7.99*
Non-sedating Antihistamines (2 nd generation)	Cetirizine (Zyrtec [®])	Once daily	\$58.99
	Desloratadine (Clarinex [®])	Once daily	\$68.99
	Fexofenadine (Allegra [®])	Once daily	\$68.99
	Loratadine (Claritin [®])	Once daily	\$19.99*
Nasal Steroids	Beclomethasone (Beconase AQ [®])	1-2 sprays each nostril daily	\$76.68
	Budesonide (Rhinocort [®])	1 spray/nostril once daily	\$69.99
	Flunisolide (Nasarel [®])	2 sprays in each nostril twice daily	\$37.99*
	Fluticasone (Flonase [®])	2 sprays/nostril daily or 1 spray/nostril twice daily	\$59.99*
	Mometasone (Nasonex [®])	2 sprays per nostril daily	\$67.99
	Triamcinolone (Nasacort [®])	1 spray in each nostril daily	\$67.99
Mast Cell Stabilizer	Cromolyn sodium (NasalCrom [®])	2 puffs 3-4 times/day	\$65.39
Leukotriene Inhibitor	Montelukast (Singulair [®])	Once in the evening	\$89.99
Nasal Antihistamine	Azelastine (Astelin [®])	2 sprays each nostril twice daily	\$78.48
Ophthalmic Antihistamines	Azelastine (Optivar [®])	1 drop affected eye(s) twice daily	\$75.04
	Olopatadine (Patanol [®])	1 drop affected eye(s) twice daily	\$69.99
	Ketotifen (Zaditor [®])	1 drop affected eye(s) every 6 to 8 hours	\$69.02

*Generic available (cost provided)

References

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- Drugstore.com located at: <http://www.drugstore.com/default.asp?catid=60&trx=28098> cited [6/01/06].