

## Using Over-the-Counter Eye Drops for Allergy

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In past issues of the QUARTERLY, we have described the problems experienced by people who take the vasoconstricting nose drops or sprays. These are intended for use with viral infections such as colds, not for allergy symptoms. This continual, incorrect use leads to the medication causing the very symptoms that it was taken to control, swelling in the lining of the nose. This is usually called “rebound” and it leads to the addictive use of nose drops or sprays. It is a long and difficult process to wean a person off these drugs.

Dr. S. Spector, Los Angeles, CA, has found that the over-the-counter eye drops do the same disservice for those with eye symptoms from allergy. The person suffers from the redness and itching in the eye because of allergy and uses a vasoconstricting eye product which is for temporary relief of irritation. This continual, incorrect use leads to the eye drops causing the very symptoms that it was taken to control. The vasoconstricting eyedrops become less and less effective, even when overused. In other words – rebound. It takes many months of intensive therapy to correct this problem.

The medical name for this eye condition is conjunctivitis medicamentosa. The symptoms are use of vasoconstricting eye drops to control redness, but the person uses them for far longer and more heavily than the recommended dose. As well, over use of the vasoconstricting eye drops may pose a danger for anyone with high blood pressure or a heart disorder.

*Reference: Abstract #239, American Academy of Allergy Meeting, March 12-17, 1993*

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