

## **RHINITIS MEDICAMENTOSA**

Rhinitis medicamentosa is a condition resulting from chronic over-the-counter nasal decongestant spray use. It is caused by rebound congestion and engorgement of the nasal mucosa after the effects of the nasal spray have worn off. This results in recurrent nasal stuffiness and obstruction which often times is worse than the original insult that caused the nasal stuffiness and congestion. The key to treating this problem is to wean off the nasal decongestant spray completely.

The following is a treatment plan to slowly wean off the nasal spray. It consists of diluting your nasal spray with saline solution as follows:

1. Mix  $\frac{3}{4}$  nasal spray and  $\frac{1}{4}$  saline and use this for 1 week.
2. Mix  $\frac{1}{2}$  nasal spray and  $\frac{1}{2}$  saline and use this for the second week.
3. Mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  nasal spray and  $\frac{3}{4}$  saline and use this for the third week.
4. After this, completely discontinue the nasal spray use.

One simple method to accomplish the dilutions is to use the nasal decongestant spray until it is  $\frac{1}{4}$  empty, then fill the rest with saline. Use this  $\frac{1}{4}$  diluted spray until it is  $\frac{1}{4}$  empty and fill it again with saline (this will create a mix of  $\frac{1}{2}$  nasal decongestant and  $\frac{1}{2}$  saline). Do this again for the last dilution.

Saline can be found over-the-counter at most stores and pharmacies. Brand names include *Ocean Spray*, *Ayr* or a *Neil Med* kit that comes with a bottle and packets of powder that you mix with clean water.

You will likely also be placed on a nasal steroid spray and to use this as directed on a daily basis. You are to use this while you are using the diluted nasal decongestant spray as instructed above. The effects of the nasal steroids, however, take approximately 1 to 2 weeks before you realize a benefit and, therefore, you should use this daily until instructed to do otherwise by your physician. Your physician may also place you on steroid pills to take by mouth and this will also help in relieving the congestion while you are being weaned off your nasal spray. Be sure to use these pills as instructed. Side effects with the steroid pills include upset stomach or mood changes and if these are bothersome, please call your physician.