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## Eczema, Asthma and Allergic Rhinitis – Oh my!

### Corticosteroid Use and Osteoporosis Risk

A thorough study of close to 5000 people has found a relationship between eczema and osteoporosis – likely related to corticosteroid use, orally and/or topically. Specifically, adults with eczema had a 48% increased risk of bone fracture. The main take-home message: those with eczema should have their bone mineral density assessed and monitored. Plus, they should take steps to identify risk factors and reduce them.

### Asthma and Apnea Link

Adults with asthma are at an increased risk of developing sleep apnea, a serious disorder where breathing repeatedly stops then re-starts during sleep. Sleep apnea has been associated with numerous adverse effects from fatigue (and its potential consequences) to obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular problems. Asthmatics were close to 40% more likely to have sleep apnea, pointing to a need for regular assessment in this population.

### Understanding the Immune System

This year's Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology conference took a look at some innovative new approaches to understanding the immune system. As with many other conditions, they were thinking "outside the box" and considering how micro-organisms may be at the root of the problem. Hygiene theory and gut microflora are taking center-stage and previous theories of allergen avoidance are being challenged.

### Treating Hay Fever

Allergic rhinitis (AR or hay fever) is very common – it's the fifth most common chronic condition in the US with 1 out of 6 Americans suffering from it and about 1 in 4 Canadians! A multi-disciplinary panel of experts has reviewed the available treatments for AR and has determined that the best treatments are non-drowsy antihistamines and, via prescription, nasal cortisone sprays. Other treatments should only be considered where there are compelling reasons to not use first-line therapies.

Your pharmacist can assist you in making the best selections among OTC medications – including anti-histamines to treat your hay fever. And, if you're using prescription medication, be sure to take a moment to learn about its optimal use!