

TITLE 1: "Ask the Doctor"

TITLE 2:

DATE: August 2000

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KEYWORDS:

- Pharmaceutical treatment

ABSTRACT OVERVIEW: Can antihistamines cause or aggravate RLS? One reader asks Dr. Phillips if this could be exacerbating her RLS symptoms.

COPY OF ARTICLE:

Q. *I note in your article "Living with RLS" that some antihistamines may cause or aggravate RLS. My RLS began at the same time that I began taking antihistamines for chronic hives six years ago. I'd like to explore that connection. How can I find out more?*

A. Without knowing exactly which antihistamine you have been taking, it is difficult to answer your question precisely. However, there may very well be a connection between your antihistamine and your symptoms.



Medications that block or deplete dopamine, a substance involved in nerve conduction, can make RLS worse. Promethazine (Compazine) is an antihistamine with such an effect.

In addition, drugs that block or reduce serotonin's effects can worsen symptoms of RLS. The antihistamines cyproheptadine (Periactin) and azatidine (Optimine) are medications in that category.

The list of medications believed to contribute to RLS symptoms is quite long. We do not have large controlled trials on most of these agents, so strong evidence in this area is lacking. However, it is probable that many medications exacerbate RLS symptoms. The best way to find out if a certain

drug is contributing to your symptoms is to stop it (in consultation with your physician) and pay attention to your symptoms over time.

I appreciate the help of Christina Goff in the College of Pharmacy at the University of Kentucky in helping answer this question.

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