



# spotlight on health

## Nationwide Survey Shows Majority Of U.S. Adults With Hypertension Take Cold And Flu Medications That May Increase Blood Pressure <sup>Ⓣ</sup>

(NAPS)—A new survey of 573 U.S. adults who have hypertension conducted by Harris Interactive found that two-thirds (68 percent) typically take over-the-counter cold and flu medications that contain a nasal decongestant. According to the American Heart Association, the use of decongestants may raise blood pressure. The U.S. population experiences up to one billion colds annually, making it critical for the 65 million Americans suffering from high blood pressure to be aware of the potential implications associated with decongestants.

“It is important that people with high blood pressure speak with their physician or pharmacist regarding the effects of decongestants on their blood pressure and to learn how to carefully screen over-the-counter cold and flu remedies for decongestants,” said Roger S. Blumenthal, M. D., director of the Johns Hopkins Ciccarone Center for the Prevention of Heart Disease and associate professor of medicine, division of cardiology, at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. “This is particularly relevant during the winter months, a time of year when we

see a higher incidence of the common cold and the flu.”

We caught up with Dr. Blumenthal to learn more about what high blood pressure sufferers need to know, particularly during the winter months.

### **Q: How do decongestants typically affect people with high blood pressure?**

A: Decongestants work by constricting blood vessels, which in turn shrinks the swelling in the nose and opens nasal passages. While this constriction of blood vessels helps alleviate congestion, it may raise high blood pressure temporarily after each dose. Some common decongestants include pseudoephedrine and phenylephrine.

### **Q: What can high blood pressure sufferers take to relieve their cold and flu symptoms?**

A: There are over-the-counter cold and flu remedies that do not contain a decongestant, such as Coricidin HBP<sup>®</sup>, which has been specifically formulated to be a safe and effective option for people with high blood pressure.

### **Q: Is there anything else that hypertensive patients and their**

### **loved ones need to know?**

A: Yes. Be mindful of overexerting yourself if you haven't been physically active lately.

Some studies suggest that overexertion, such as shoveling snow, after long periods of inactivity may increase heart health risks. It's also important to have your blood pressure checked regularly and to keep appointments with your doctor. This will help everyone monitor your hypertension program and make the necessary adjustments to keep it under control.

### **Q: Where can high blood pressure sufferers and their caregivers find more information?**

A: The American Heart Association's hypertension Web site [www.americanheart.org/hbp](http://www.americanheart.org/hbp) and [www.coricidinhbp.com](http://www.coricidinhbp.com) both share information on the use of decongestants for those who suffer from high blood pressure. People with hypertension and their loved ones can also obtain a free Blood Pressure, Cholesterol, and Weight Tracker by calling the American Heart Association at 1-800-AHA-USA1.



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**Note to Editors:** The survey was conducted online by Harris Interactive<sup>®</sup> from November 8-10, 2005 among a nationwide sample of 573 U.S. adults 18 years of age or older who have ever been diagnosed with hypertension by a health care professional. The sampling error is plus or minus 6.3 percentage points. The survey was conducted for Schering-Plough.