

Nasacort OTC package delivers maximum impact with minimal material

By [Lisa McTigue Pierce](#) in [Pharmaceutical Packaging](#) on April 30, 2015



The over-the-counter Nasacort allergy spray fold-over blister package wow-ed consumers and packaging competition judges alike.

Shelf impact matters more for over-the-counter (OTC) pharmaceuticals than it does for the previous prescription version. So when Nasacort Allergy 24 HR Nasal Allergy Spray made its OTC debut, brand owner Chattem/Sanofi made sure the knockout packaging stopped people in their tracks—in stores and in industry competitions.

Unique for the category, the fold-over blister card design with a distinctive “N”-shaped thermoformed blister displays and protects the primary package—spray bottles of varying doses.

This Nasacort packaging won a 2014 AmeriStar award from the Institute of Packaging Professionals (IoPP) and, more recently, a 2015 Worldstar award from the World Packaging Organisation.

The Worldstar announcement explains the impact this one packaging design had on the whole category: “With less than 1% share of the Rx Allergy Spray category and 0% brand awareness at launch, the Nasacort Rx to OTC switch is the core driver behind 8.3% growth rate of the \$2.4 billion U.S. OTC allergy category. The launch increased shopper basket size, adding incremental dollars to the category.”

Nancy Limback, manager of packaging innovation and development at Sanofi, talks about the development and details of this ground-breaking package.

How does the fold-over blister card design minimize material usage? Compared to what?

Limback: Sustainability for the packaging was a priority. The package uses less paperboard than a similar-sized standard carton and is made from board that has been certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). The thermoform is made from rPET, which uses a minimum of 40% recycled PET resin content.

There is a small notch in the center front of the “N”-shaped blister. What is this for?

Limback: The design inputs dictated a specific finished package height that wasn't much larger than the bottle height. The width of the “N legs” was dictated by the bottle diameter, thermoforming optimization and finished package width restriction. Minimized stacking lugs on the thermoform aid in automatic feeding of the thermoform on the filling line.

As an additional challenge, we felt it was important to maximize our seal area for optimum package integrity. To do this, the triangular areas at the top and bottom of the thermoform were placed at card level for additional seal strength.

How do you ensure that the round spray bottles are front facing when they are packed in the blisters?

Limback: The bottles are carefully positioned in the thermoform with the label facing forward before the backing booklet card is positioned and sealed. The thermoform was specifically designed to hold the bottle in position without adhesive. Several rounds of modifications and testing led to the final design.

How many SKUs are sold in the fold-over blister?

Limback: The one 60-count spray and 120-count spray were launched in Q1 2014, followed in July with the two 120-count spray products. All use the same primary package, booklet card and “N” thermoform.

Why also sell a flat carded blister with 3x 120-sprays?

Limback: The club stores generally prefer larger quantities of product, as well differentiation from the retail channels. A trapped blister card (a preference of club stores) was selected to offer the benefits of product visibility, generous graphic area, theft resistance and ease of display.

There is no a peg hole in the flat (trapped) carded blister. How are these packages merchandised?

Limback: The 3x 120-count spray trapped blister cards are sold at club stores in special shelf trays with slotted bottoms. The retail packages function effectively in shelf pushers, gravity feed displays or standalone on endcaps and counters.

On the back of the flat carded blister, there are three small square holes near the bottom. What are these used for?

Limback: One of our design inputs included the desire to have a secondary package that closely matched the barrier properties of the prescription carton. This posed some challenges.

We used low migration inks and coatings in a patterned application on the booklet card to avoid direct contact with the labeled bottle.

To provide circulation within the secondary package, ventilation ports were added to the booklet card and ventilation channels were added to the thermoform.

Tell us about the graphic design, such as the color scheme, hierarchy and number of sprays.

Limback: Since Nasacort Allergy 24HR was the first in its class to make the switch to over-the-counter, we felt strongly that the packaging had to maintain some of its former brand image while still standing out on the retail shelves so consumers would take notice of it.

With its patented design, the Nasacort Allergy 24HR packaging stands out from the paperboard carton options that are typically found on shelves with its bold colors, wraparound design and “N” shaped thermoform to maximize product recognition.

It was important to offer clear and compelling graphics to help educate consumers on the product use and benefits. The reclosable front partial booklet cover helps provide this information in addition to the regulated copy.

To help maintain brand equity, designers used the same variation of blue from the prescription label. [The Goldstein Group](#) was responsible for the graphic design and they also included a blue-to-orange striped sunburst at the top of the package to highlight the product’s original prescription strength efficacy, as well as to represent an allergy-free day with 24 hours of relief.

How was Rohrer involved in the package? What do they supply?

Limback: [Rohrer Corp.](#) supported the Nasacort team through development of the secondary packaging and manufacturing of the “N” thermoform and the booklet card.

The booklet card is made from 18-pt C2S solid bleached sulfate (SBS) board that has been certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). It is offset printed with seven colors of low migration inks and the outside is finished with a hard glossy UV coating to protect and maximize the impact of the explosive graphics. The heat-seal coating is applied to the interior of the card in a patterned application.

As mentioned earlier, the thermoform is made from rPET, which uses a minimum of 40% recycled PET resin content. The thermoform is filled face down on the line, the booklet card is placed over the top and heat sealed to the thermoform.