

Antihistamines

You May Be at Risk

You are currently taking a
first-generation antihistamine:

- Brompheniramine (Bromfed®, Dimetapp®, Bromfenex®, Dimetane®, BPN®, Lodrane®, Ala-Hist® IR, Dimetane®, Disomer®, J-Tan®, Veltane®)
- Carbinoxamine (Clistin®, Palgic®, Rondec®, Rhinopront®)
- Chlorpheniramine (Antagonate®, Chlor-Trimeton®, Efidac 24®, Kloromin®, Phenetron®, Pyridamal 100®, Teldrin®)
- Cyproheptadine (Periactin®, Peritol®)
- Diphenhydramide (Aler-Dryl®, Allergia-C®, Allermax®, Benadryl®, Compoz Nighttime Sleep Aid®, Diphedryl®, Diphen®, Diphenadryl®, Diphenhist®, Dytan®, Hydramine®, Nytol®, Sominex®, Unisom®)
- Dexbrompheniramine (Drixorale®)
- Triprolidine (Actidil®, Mydil®, Actifed®, Zymine®)
- Clemastine (Dayhist®, AllergyTavist®, Tavist® Allergy, Meclastin®)
- Doxylamine (Aldex AN®, Nighttime Sleep Aid, Unisom® SleepTabs)
- Hydroxyzine (Atarax®, Hypam®, Orgatrx®, Vistaril®)
- Promethazine (Phenergan®, Promethegan® Suppository, Remsed®, Phenergan®, Phenadoz®)

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THIS MEDICATION



QUIZ

FIRST-GENERATION ANTIHISTAMINES

1. This antihistamine is safe to take for a long time. **TRUE** **FALSE**
2. This antihistamine does not have any side effects. **TRUE** **FALSE**
3. This antihistamine is the best available option to treat my allergy symptoms and relieve itchiness. **TRUE** **FALSE**
4. It is never too late to substitute or discontinue this antihistamine, even at my age. **TRUE** **FALSE**



ANSWERS



1. FALSE

A second generation of antihistamine medication is now available and is safer to use.

2. FALSE

This antihistamine is associated with serious side effects that most people are unaware of. It can cause drowsiness, dizziness, dry eyes, dry mouth, and blurred vision. In some cases, it can cause constipation, memory loss, agitation, urinary retention and confusion.

3. FALSE

Although it is effective over the short term, studies show that this antihistamine is not the best long-term treatment for your allergies, dry skin or insomnia. For allergies, a new generation of antihistamines has been developed, which does not cause as many side effects as this first-generation one. Please keep on reading to learn more about healthier ways to deal with dry skin and itchiness. When it comes to insomnia, this antihistamine only covers up the symptoms without actually solving the problem.

4. TRUE

It is never too late to change or rethink the medications you take under the supervision of your doctor or pharmacist.

DID YOU KNOW?



This medication is a first-generation antihistamine that is used for relief of allergy symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose, sinus and nasal congestion, skin irritations, swelling and itchiness. This medication is commonly known to cause drowsiness. You should therefore never drive or operate heavy machinery while on this drug as it can increase the risk of accidents.



First-generation antihistamines can also cause:

- Dry mouth and dry eyes
- Constipation
- Memory loss, problems with concentration and confusion
- Urinary problems



In some people, this medication can cause a sudden drop in blood pressure leading to dizziness, especially when rising from a chair or bed. People with a history of heart disease, heart failure or glaucoma should use first-generation antihistamines with extreme caution.

WARNING

If you have glaucoma, heart disease or heart failure, you should use medications such as hydroxyzine with caution. You should also avoid taking it at the same time as sleeping pills or with other antihistamines.

Please consult your doctor, nurse or pharmacist before stopping any medication.

SO ASK YOURSELF:

YES OR NO?

Have you been taking this medication for a long time?

Y **N**

Do you ever feel tired and groggy during the day?

Y **N**

Do you feel as if you never have enough saliva, even though you drink water regularly?

Y **N**

Do you have problems with your memory or feel confused?

Y **N**

AS YOU AGE

Age-related changes take place in your body and modify the way you process medications. Drugs stay in your body longer and diminished liver function and poor blood flow to your kidneys may increase side effects. The chances you will take more than one medication increases as you age, as does your likelihood of having multiple chronic illnesses.

Unfortunately, this important information is often not passed on to patients who are taking this drug. Please consult your doctor, nurse or pharmacist to discuss this further. New drugs are now on the market that can relieve your allergy symptoms or dry skin with fewer side effects and improved quality of life.

ALTERNATIVES

If you are taking this first-generation antihistamine to help relieve dry skin or itchiness:

Many people have dry and/or itchy skin as they age. The most important thing to do is to find a way to break the “itch-scratch” cycle, which just makes itching worse. There are many non-medicinal strategies to reduce itchiness and dry skin such as:

- Eliminating harsh soaps and detergents: substitute soap with milder cleansers such as bath gels.
- Limiting showers and baths to 10 minutes or less.
- Applying moisturizers immediately after bathing, and up to three times per day as needed to adequately hydrate the skin. Ointments or thick creams with high lipid content (such as those that contain shea butter) are more effective than lotions or gels.
- Using humidifiers during the winter, as indoor heating systems can exacerbate dry skin.
- If your skin is very itchy, placing a cold washcloth on it to relieve the burning feeling.

If you are taking this medication to relieve your allergy symptoms:

- This medication is a first-generation antihistamine. Because of the more dangerous side effects associated with this medication, there are now second-generation antihistamines such as Claritin® or Reactine®, which are available over the counter and are safer for your everyday allergy needs.
- Speak to your pharmacist, nurse and/or doctor about other antihistamine medications to treat allergy symptoms that have fewer serious side effects.



MRS. PARKER'S STORY

“I have had hay fever every summer for the past 30 years. Back then, my physician prescribed Atarax® to relieve my allergy symptoms. I have been taking it every year during the allergy season as it relieved my symptoms. However, this year I fell asleep while driving my car and was involved in an accident.

When I mentioned the accident to my pharmacist, he suspected Atarax® to be the cause of my sleepiness. He immediately replaced Atarax® with Claritin®. I noticed the difference right away: I feel less lethargic and less sleepy. My allergy symptoms are under control and I even notice that my memory problems are gone, which was something that was really getting me worried!

In winter, my skin is itchy and dry. Instead of taking Atarax® or Claritin®, my pharmacist recommended substituting my regular soap with a bath gel and applying a thick moisturizing cream to my skin twice daily to avoid scratching. I also bought a humidifier that I turn on in my bedroom at night. My itchy skin has completely resolved.”



5 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

1. Do I need to continue my medication?
 2. How do I reduce my dose?
 3. Is there an alternative treatment?
 4. What symptoms should I look for when I stop my medication?
 5. With whom do I follow up and when?
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Questions I want to ask my health care provider about my medication

Use this space to write down questions you may want to ask:

This brochure can be found online at:

www.deprescribingnetwork.ca/useful-resources