

Antihistamines

Actions: Antihistamines are medications which block the effects of histamine, which is released by allergy cells during allergic reactions.

Types: There are many different brands of antihistamines. They are commonly used as capsules, tablets (swallowed or dissolvable), and liquids, all of which are taken by mouth. Most antihistamines are currently available OTC (over-the-counter); However there are a few that are still available only by prescription. The older antihistamines (1st generation) are typically more sedating and shorter acting. The newer antihistamines (2nd generation) are less sedating and longer acting.

Examples of Antihistamines:

1st Generation: Atarax (hydroxyzine), Benadryl (diphenhydramine), Chlor-Trimeton (chlorpheniramine), Doxepin, Tavist (clemastine), and Periactin (cyproheptadine).

2nd Generation: Allegra (fexofenadine), Claritin (loratadine), Clarinex (desloratadine), Zyrtec (cetirizine), and Xyzal (levocetirizine).

Side Effects: Sedation and dryness are the most common side effects of antihistamines. These effects can occur with either 1st or 2nd generation antihistamines however, it is far more of an issue with the 1st generation antihistamines. Alcohol, tranquilizers, and other sedating medications may increase the sedative effects of antihistamines. If an antihistamine is combined with a decongestant, side effects may include nervousness, insomnia, irritability, palpitations, rapid heart beat. Consult your prescribing doctor if these side effects occur.

Special Instructions:

- Notify your doctor if you:
 - Are pregnant or breast-feeding
 - Have glaucoma
 - Have prostate problems
 - Have liver disease
 - Have a heart condition or high blood pressure
- Chronic hives: Your provider will frequently prescribe antihistamines at higher doses than is recommended on package labeling.
- Notify your provider of all other medications you are taking (prescription and OTC), since drug interactions or over-dosages may occur.