

## ANTIHISTAMINES

# You May Be at Risk For a Fall

If you are taking one of these antihistamines. These medications are often used for allergies and sleep problems, and many are available without a prescription. These antihistamines may also be found in over-the-counter products to treat cough and cold symptoms.

### NON-PRESCRIPTION

#### Brompheniramine

- Bromfed
- Dimetapp
- Bromfenex
- Triaminic Cold & Allergy

#### Carbinoxamine

- Karbinal ER
- RyVent

#### Chlorpheniramine

- Aller-Chlor
- Chlor-Trimeton
- Coricidin HBP Cold & Flu

#### Clemastine

- Dayhist Allergy 12 Hour Relief

#### Cyproheptadine

#### Dexchlorpheniramine

- RyClora
- Rescon
- Polytussin DM

#### Dimenhydrinate

- Dramamine
- Draminate Motion Sickness

#### Diphenhydramine

- Benadryl
- ZzzQuil
- Tylenol PM
- Advil PM

#### Doxylamine

- Nighttime Sleep Aid
- Unisom
- Diclegis

#### Meclizine

- Dramamine Less Drowsy
- Antivert
- Bonine
- Travel-Ease

#### Pyrilamine

- Glen PE
- Vazotab

#### Tripolidine

- Histex
- Histex PDX

### PRESCRIPTION

#### Hydroxyzine

- Atarax

#### Promethazine

- Phenergan
- Promethegan
- Phenadoz





## Test your knowledge about antihistamines

TRUE

FALSE

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Antihistamines do not cause any side effects.                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Low doses of antihistamines cannot cause side effects.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Antihistamines may not be the best option to treat allergies or sleep problems. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Stopping this antihistamine may cause my original symptoms to return.           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Answers

### 1 **FALSE:** Antihistamines do not cause any side effects.

Antihistamines can cause a number of side effects as people who take them are at an increased risk for:

- Memory and concentration problems
- Problems with constipation and bladder control
- Feeling tired during the day
- Dizziness, falls and fractures
- Dry eyes, dry mouth, and blurred vision

### 2 **FALSE:** Low doses of antihistamines cannot cause side effects.

Even if you take a small dose, this medication may have side effects. It may reduce your mental ability and slow your reflexes, which can lead to injury.

### 3 **TRUE:** Antihistamines may not be the best option to treat allergies or sleep problems.

This medication is not the best treatment for allergies or sleep problems.

- For allergies, loratadine (Claritin), cetirizine (Zyrtec), or fexofenadine (Allegra) are options that have fewer side effects and lower risk of falls.
- For sleep problems, antihistamines can result in poor sleep quality, increased daytime sleepiness, and do not address the underlying problem. Alternate treatments are available.

### 4 **TRUE:** Stopping this antihistamine may cause my original symptoms to return.

Many people have slowly reduced this medication and found other ways to help manage their allergies and sleep problems.



**Want to learn more?**

We've enclosed information with resources to help you manage allergies and develop healthier sleep habits. This information can help you choose a safe option.

## Did you know?

- ▶ As you age, these medications remain in your body for longer periods of time. This happens because our liver and kidneys take more time to remove medications from our bodies. This means a dose that was once safe may start causing side effects.
- ▶ Antihistamines can cause problems like difficulty maintaining balance, increased risk of falls and fractures, issues with memory, and loss of control over bladder function. They can cause daytime drowsiness which could result in a car crash.
- ▶ You should not take antihistamines at the same time as sleeping pills or other medications that cause drowsiness.
- ▶ Other treatments can help improve sleep and relieve allergies with fewer side effects. These are better choices for your safety.
- ▶ Antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine (also called Benadryl) and doxylamine, are found in combination medications you can purchase without a prescription. Examples include: Advil PM, Tylenol PM, and Unisom. Check if the medicine you take contains diphenhydramine, doxylamine, or another antihistamine (see cover page for common brand name medications).



### **WARNING**

Use antihistamines with caution if you have glaucoma, heart disease, or heart failure.



## Alternatives for Antihistamines

### Managing your allergies

Many people have allergies to certain triggers such as dust, pollen, skin or fur from pets, or mold. Your doctor or pharmacist may be able to help you find out what causes your allergies. There are strategies to help you manage your allergies.

- Eliminate or avoid your triggers when possible.
- If you are allergic to mold, or have asthma, follow the [CDC guidance](#) on cleaning and preventing mold.
- Use an air purifier with a high-energy particulate air (HEPA) filter.

### Managing dry skin or itchiness

Many people have dry and/or itchy skin as they age. There are many strategies to reduce itchiness and dry skin without medicines.

- Eliminate harsh soaps and detergents: substitute soaps with a gentle fragrance-free cleanser.
- Limit showers and baths to 10 minutes or less.
- Apply 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.
- Use humidifiers during the winter, as indoor heating systems can make dry skin worse.



## Mrs. Park's Story

Mrs. Park is 67, and she had been taking Atarax, a medicine like the one you're taking.

"I've had hay fever every summer for the past 30 years. Years ago, my doctor prescribed Atarax for my allergy symptoms. I've been taking it every year during allergy season. However, this year I fell asleep while driving my car and got into a car crash.

When I mentioned the car crash to my doctor, she thought Atarax was the cause of my sleepiness. She replaced it with Claritin. I noticed the difference right away. I don't feel as tired or sleepy. My allergy symptoms are under control, and I even notice that my memory problems are gone. This was something that I was always worried about!"

## Making changes to your regimen

Discuss alternative treatments with your doctor or pharmacist before making changes to your regimen.

## Alternatives for Antihistamines cont'd.

### Managing Insomnia

There are strategies you can try at home to help with insomnia. Insomnia is when you have trouble falling or staying asleep.

- Do not read or watch TV in bed. Watching TV or reading in bed might make it harder for you to fall asleep.
- Go to bed at the same time every night even on the weekends.
- Avoid caffeine, chocolate, and nicotine at least 5 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol or heavy meals close to bedtime.
- Keep your room quiet, relaxing, and at a cool temperature when sleeping.
- Stop using electronics at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about using a sleep diary, which can help you understand disruptive sleep patterns.



### So ask yourself

- |   | YES                      | NO                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Are you often tired or sleepy during the day?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Does your mouth feel dry, even when you drink water regularly?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Do you ever have problems with your memory or your balance?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Do you ever feel hungover in the morning, even though you have not been drinking? Hangover symptoms include headache, nausea, dizziness, or sensitivity to light. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you may be experiencing side effects. Tell your healthcare professional or pharmacist about these symptoms and ask them about potential alternatives.**

