

Promethazine

Names The generic drug name is promethazine (proe meth' a zeen). Brand names include Promethegan® suppositories and Prometh® VC Syrup (contains phenylephrine and promethazine). There may be other names for this medication.

Why am I Taking Promethazine and How is it Taken?

This drug is an antihistamine, used for allergies and nasal congestion, which is also used to:

- prevent nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy or radiation therapy
- help people go to sleep and control their anxiety before or after surgery

This medicine is available as a tablet and syrup (liquid) to take by mouth and as a rectal suppository. How often you take this medicine, and your dose, will depend on the condition being treated. If you take the liquid medication, use a dose measuring spoon, not an ordinary spoon. Can be taken with food or a glass of water or milk to lessen stomach irritation if necessary.

What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?

Tell your doctor if you:

- have had an allergic reaction to promethazine or other phenothiazines or you have other allergies
- have or have ever had asthma, high blood pressure, an enlarged prostate (men only), glaucoma, seizures, ulcers, blockage in the passage between the stomach and intestine, blockage in the bladder, lung disease, sleep apnea, cancer, any condition that affects the blood cell production in your bone marrow, or heart or liver disease
- are pregnant or breastfeeding

This drug may interact with other medications, increasing or decreasing their effectiveness or causing harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all prescription and over-the-counter medications, vitamins, or herbal supplements that you are taking.

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Most common are drowsiness, confusion, and disorientation
- May have the opposite (paradoxical) effect in some people and cause excitability, restlessness, insomnia, or, rarely, seizures
- Other side effects may include dry mouth, headache, ringing in your ears, and double vision

When Should I
Call the
Doctor?

Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if you have life-threatening symptoms such as signs of severe allergic reaction: Swelling or tingling in your face, tongue, mouth, or throat; chest tightness; wheezing; trouble breathing or swallowing; dizziness, shortness of breath; heart palpitations; or hives.

Please let us know if you go to the emergency room or are admitted to the hospital.

Call your doctor immediately if you experience:

- muscle rigidity, fever, difficult or fast breathing, seizures, fast heartbeat, increased sweating, loss of bladder control, unusually pale skin, or tiredness or weakness. (possibly signs of serious, but rare, condition called neuroleptic malignant syndrome)
- unusual bleeding: Bleeding gums; blood in urine/stools; bloody nose
- signs of infection: Fever, chills, sore throat
- slowed breathing
- abnormal or uncontrollable movements, abnormal neck position
- hallucinations (seeing things or hearing voices that do not exist), uncontrollable shaking of a part of the body, uncontrolled eye movements

What Else
Should I Know
About
Promethazine?

- If you're over age 65, talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of this medication. Other medications may be safer for you.
- Avoid unnecessary or prolonged exposure to sunlight and to wear protective clothing, sunglasses, and sunscreen – you may be very sensitive to sunlight.
- For dry mouth, use sugarless candy or gum, melt bits of ice in your mouth, or use a saliva substitute. If dryness continues for 2 weeks, talk to your doctor.
- *Check with your doctor before drinking alcohol.*
- If you are taking the extended-release capsule form of this medicine, swallow it whole. Do not break, crush, or chew before swallowing.
- Store the medicine at room temperature, away from heat, moisture, and direct light.
- If taking promethazine on a regular basis, make sure your doctor knows if you are taking large amounts of aspirin at the same time.
- If you are having surgery, including dental surgery, tell the doctor or dentist that you are taking promethazine.
- If you take this medicine regularly and you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular dosing schedule. Don't take a double dose.
- For more information, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.