

# Diphenhydramine

Names	The generic drug name is diphenhydramine (dye fen hye' dra meen). Benadryl® is a brand name. There are other brand names for this medication. Check all labels since diphenhydramine is an ingredient in many over-the-counter combination medications to relieve mild pain, allergy symptoms, and insomnia.
How is It Administered?	Diphenhydramine may be taken by mouth as a capsule, tablet, dissolving strip, or syrup. It is also available as a (rectal) suppository. The injectable form requires a prescription and must be injected into a muscle or a vein.
Why am I Taking This Medication?	This drug is used to prevent nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy or radiation therapy, and to reduce anxiety and/or insomnia. Diphenhydramine is most commonly used to fight allergic symptoms.
How Does it Work?	Histamines are proteins released by certain types of white blood cells as part of the body's immune response to protect us from potentially harmful substances. Histamines cause local tissues to become inflamed (swollen, red) and smooth muscles to constrict. Smooth muscle, which is different from skeletal muscle, is found in the walls of hollow organs - blood vessels, airways, digestive tract, bladder, and uterus. Diphenhydramine works by interfering with the actions of histamines.
What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?	Tell your doctor if you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• have had an unusual or allergic reaction to antihistamines</li><li>• are pregnant or breastfeeding</li><li>• have or have ever had asthma/respiratory disease, glaucoma, high blood pressure, seizures, ulcers, or an overactive thyroid gland</li></ul>

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

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Dry mouth, nose, and throat; constipation
- Drowsiness, dizziness, and/or headache
- Loss of appetite or nausea
- Restlessness, excitement (especially in children)

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- To prevent constipation, drink 2-3 quarts of fluids every day, especially water, unless your doctor has restricted your fluids.
- If you have constipation, check with your doctor before using any laxative or enema products.
- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen constipation or headache.

When Should I Call the Doctor?

Call your doctor immediately if you have:

- Vision problems
- Difficulty urinating or painful urination

What Else Should I Know About Benadryl?

- If you will be using the liquid form of this medication, tell your doctor if you are following a low-sodium (salt) diet.
- If the medication upsets your stomach, you can take it with food or a glass of water or milk.
- If you are having surgery, including dental surgery, tell the doctor or dentist that you are taking diphenhydramine.
- This medication might make you drowsy. Do not drive a car or operate machinery until you know how it affects you.
- Alcohol can add to the drowsiness caused by this medication. Avoid alcoholic beverages while you are taking this medication.
- If you have phenylketonuria (PKU, an inherited condition in which you need to avoid eating foods with phenylalanine in them), you should know that some brands of chewable tablets and rapidly disintegrating tablets that contain diphenhydramine may also contain the sweetener aspartame, a source of phenylalanine.
- If you have any additional questions, please take to your doctor.

