

Benadryl (Diphenhydramine) basics

Treats allergy symptoms and helps you sleep. Benadryl (Diphenhydramine) is great for allergies, but curl up on the couch after taking it and get ready for a nap.

What to expect when starting

Here's when people typically experience benefits as well as some possible side effects. Your experience may be different.

	Hours	Days	Weeks	Months	Long term
Benadryl (Diphenhydramine) Drug effectiveness					
Possible side effects†					
Drowsiness					
Next-day sleepiness					
Dry mouth					
Blurred vision					
Constipation					
Difficulty urinating					

† Data on frequency of side effects is not available.

Tips from pharmacists

- Take it as needed every 4 to 6 hours.
- Benadryl (Diphenhydramine) can make you dehydrated, so avoid this side effect by drinking plenty of fluids.
- Benadryl (Diphenhydramine) makes you tired, so take it before you go to sleep.
- Don't take it with alcohol or other drugs that make you sleepy.
- If you need to use it for more than a few weeks, talk with your doctor. A different medication might work better for you long-term.
- If you only have itchy or watery eyes, try using just an antihistamine eye drop.

Risks and warnings

Contact your doctor if you experience any of these.

Overdose

There are a variety of over-the-counter medications with the same ingredients as Benadryl (Diphenhydramine). It's not safe to use more than one medication containing diphenhydramine (the ingredient in Benadryl (Diphenhydramine)) at the same time. Read package labels carefully to make sure you take the right dose of these medications.

Increased side effects

People age 65 years and older have a higher risk of side effects from taking antihistamine medications like Benadryl (Diphenhydramine). Watch for changes in vision, severe dry mouth, trouble urinating, or constipation. The drowsiness caused by Benadryl (Diphenhydramine) can make you "unsteady" on your feet, leading to a higher chance of falls.

Driving impairment

Benadryl (Diphenhydramine) can lower your ability to focus, think, and react. Be careful. Avoid activities that require you to be alert, such as driving a car or operating machinery, until you know how this medication affects you.