

Zyrtec (cetirizine) basics

Treats allergy symptoms. Zyrtec (cetirizine) can help you with some allergy symptoms without making you very drowsy.

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
Zyrtec (cetirizine) Drug effectiveness					
Possible side effects†					
Drowsiness					
Dizziness					
Dry mouth					
Feeling weak					

† Data on frequency of side effects is not available.

Tips from pharmacists

- You can take this once a day with or without food.
- Zyrtec (cetirizine) can be taken at bedtime if it makes you sleepy.
- If you're taking it for chronic hives, Zyrtec (cetirizine) doesn't prevent the more serious allergic reactions such as wheezing or trouble breathing.
- If you need to use it for more than a few weeks, talk with your doctor about trying a nasal steroid instead since it might work better for you long-term.
- Using an antihistamine eye drop instead can also work better to treat itchy or watery eyes.

Risks and warnings

Contact your doctor if you experience any of these.

Increased side effects in the elderly

People aged 65 and older have a higher risk of experiencing side effects from taking antihistamine medications like Zyrtec (cetirizine). Watch out for changes in vision, severe dry mouth, trouble urinating, or constipation. Also, feelings of drowsiness may leave you unsteady on your feet, which can potentially lead to falls and injuries. Talk with your doctor before using Zyrtec (cetirizine).

Impaired alertness

Zyrtec (cetirizine) can lower your ability to focus, think, and react. Avoid activities that require you to be alert, such as driving a car or operating machinery, until you know how this medication affects you. Ask a doctor or pharmacist before using Zyrtec (cetirizine) if you are taking tranquilizers or sedatives.

History of liver or kidney conditions

People with kidney or liver problems may need to take a lower dose of Zyrtec (cetirizine) to prevent overdose. Talk with your doctor to be sure you are using the correct dose.