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DIPHENHYDRAMINE

Brand names: Benadryl®

What is this medication used for?

Diphenhydramine is an antihistamine used for the treatment of allergy and cold symptoms. It is also used as a sleep aid, to treat motion sickness and mild forms of Parkinson's disease. In hospice patients, diphenhydramine may also be used alone, or in combination with other medications, to reduce nausea, vomiting and anxiety near the end of life.

How should I take this medication?

Diphenhydramine is available in oral form, as an injection and a topical cream. It is also compounded with other medications and used as a suppository or a topical gel.

The oral form can be taken with or without food. It should be taken with a full glass of water.

For motion sickness, a dose is usually taken 30 minutes before motion, then with meals and at bedtime for the duration of motion exposure.

As a sleep aid, diphenhydramine should be taken approximately 30 minutes before bedtime.

When using the topical gel, caregivers should wear gloves to make sure they do not self-medicate.

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and wait until your next regularly scheduled dose. Do not take extra medicine to make up for the missed dose.

Never take more of this medication than is prescribed for you. The maximum amount of diphenhydramine that you should take in any 24-hour period is 300 mg.

What are the side effects of this medication?

- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Difficulty urinating or an enlarged prostate
- If you experience dizziness or drowsiness, avoid any activities in which you must be alert, such as driving or operating heavy machinery.

Other side effects not listed may also occur. Check with your physician if you notice any other effects.

Contact your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following:

Extreme sleepiness, confusion, weakness, ringing in the ears, blurred vision, large pupils, dry mouth, flushing, fever, shaking, insomnia, hallucinations, or seizures

Special Instructions:

Use alcohol cautiously. Alcohol may increase drowsiness and dizziness while taking diphenhydramine.

Talk to your pharmacist before taking other over-the-counter cough, cold, allergy, or insomnia medications. These products may contain medicines similar to diphenhydramine, which could lead to an antihistamine overdose.

This information is only a summary. Please contact your healthcare professional for additional information about this medication.