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PSYCHIATRY

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PATIENT EDUCATION

Hydroxyzine

Vistaril / Generic hydrochloride and pamoate formulations

A guide for adults taking hydroxyzine.
Follow the directions on your prescription and your provider's recommendations.

FOLLOW YOUR DAILY LIMIT | CHECK HEART-RHYTHM & SEDATING MEDICINES

Formulations: Tablets, capsules, and liquids have different strengths and salt names. Use the formulation and amount on your prescription.

What it is used for

Hydroxyzine is an antihistamine used for anxiety and itching. It is sometimes prescribed off-label for sleep. It can help short-term symptoms, but ongoing anxiety or insomnia still needs a broader treatment plan.

How it works

It blocks histamine H1 receptors, producing antihistamine effects and sedation. Anticholinergic effects can contribute to dry mouth, constipation, and urinary difficulty.

What to expect over time

Effects can begin after a dose, while sedation may last longer than the anxiety relief. Review frequent use, persistent symptoms, or next-day impairment with your provider.

Taking your medication

- Follow the prescribed scheduled or as-needed instructions. Do not repeat doses early because relief is incomplete.
- Measure liquids with the supplied device.
- Do not double a missed dose. For as-needed use, take only when indicated and within the prescribed interval.
- Avoid alcohol and do not drive when sleepy or impaired.

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Side effects and safety

Possible side effects

- Drowsiness or fatigue
- Dry mouth or constipation
- Dizziness or blurred vision
- Confusion or urinary difficulty, especially in older adults

Keeping track of treatment

Some side effects resolve with time; others may require a change of medication. Discuss persistent or bothersome side effects with your provider.

Report fainting, palpitations, falls, urinary problems, or confusion. An ECG may be appropriate when heart-rhythm risks or interacting medicines are present.

If you take too much

For a suspected overdose, call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222** immediately, even if you feel well. Call 911 for a seizure, collapse, trouble breathing, or inability to wake.

Before you start

Do not use with a prolonged QT interval. Discuss heart disease, fainting, low potassium or magnesium, glaucoma, urinary retention, and constipation. U.S. labeling contraindicates early pregnancy; discuss pregnancy plans and breastfeeding before use.

Medicines and interactions

Review all your medications with your provider, including over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Have new medications checked before taking them.

Alcohol, opioids, benzodiazepines, and other sedatives can substantially increase impairment. Other antihistamines or anticholinergics add confusion, bowel, and urinary effects.

QT-prolonging medicines—including some antibiotics, antipsychotics, and antidepressants—need particular review.

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Living with your treatment

When to get help

Emergency symptoms. Get emergency care for fainting with palpitations, a seizure, severe allergy, or trouble breathing.

Prompt medical advice. Report persistent confusion, inability to urinate, marked dizziness, or repeated falls.

If you feel unsafe or have thoughts of self-harm, call 911 or go to an emergency department.

Your questions answered

Is it a benzodiazepine?
No. It is not a controlled benzodiazepine, but it can still impair driving and cause important interactions.

Should I take it every night for sleep?
Only if that is the agreed plan. Persistent insomnia should be assessed, including whether CBT-I or another approach would fit better.

Everyday tips

Check OTC allergy and “PM” medicines before adding them.

Discuss frequent as-needed use rather than increasing the dose.

Storage and safety

Keep medication in its labeled container, away from excess heat and moisture and out of reach of children and pets. Do not share it. Ask a pharmacy about disposal of unused medication.

Sources

Pfizer: Vistaril prescribing information

Educational handout; does not replace your prescription or provider's recommendations.