

# Cetirizine

## Why is this medication prescribed?

This medication is an antihistamine that treats symptoms such as itching, runny nose, watery eyes, and sneezing from "hay fever" and other allergies. It is also used to relieve itching from hives.

## How should this medicine be used?

Take this medication by mouth with or without food, usually once a day or as directed by your doctor. Dosage is based on your age, condition, and response to treatment. Do not increase your dose or take this drug more often than directed. Do not take more of this medication than recommended for your age.

Tell your doctor if your allergy symptoms do not improve after 3 days of treatment or if your hives last more than 6 weeks. Seek immediate medical attention if your condition worsens or if you think you have a serious medical problem (e.g., very serious allergic reaction/anaphylaxis).

## What special precautions should I follow?

Before taking cetirizine, tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are allergic to it; or to hydroxyzine; or if you have any other allergies.

Before using this medication, tell your doctor or pharmacist your medical history. Do not self-treat with this medication without consulting your doctor first if you have certain medical conditions such as- kidney disease, liver disease.

This drug may make you drowsy. Use caution while driving, using machinery, or doing any activity that requires alertness. Limit alcoholic beverages.

If you have hives and your doctor has prescribed cetirizine, or if you are considering using this drug to treat your own hives, tell your doctor immediately if you have any of these other symptoms because they may be signs of a more serious condition- hives that are an unusual color, hives that look bruised or blistered, hives that do not itch.

Kidney function declines as you grow older. This medication is removed by the kidneys. Therefore, older adults may be at greater risk for side effects (e.g., drowsiness) while using this drug.

During pregnancy, this medication should be used only when clearly needed and as directed by your doctor. Discuss the risks and benefits with your doctor before taking this drug.

This medication passes into breast milk. Breast-feeding is not recommended while using this drug.

### **What special dietary instructions should I follow?**

You may take this medication with or without food.

### **What should I do if I forget a dose?**

If you miss a dose, use it as soon as you remember. If it is near the time of the next dose, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not double the dose to catch up.

### **What side effects can this medication cause?**

Get emergency medical help if you have any of these signs of an allergic reaction: hives; difficulty breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Stop using this medication and call your doctor at once if you have any of these serious side effects

- fast, pounding, or uneven heartbeat;
- weakness, tremors (uncontrolled shaking), or sleep problems (insomnia);
- severe restless feeling, hyperactivity;
- confusion;
- problems with vision; or
- urinating less than usual or not at all.

Less serious side effects may include:

- dizziness, drowsiness;
- tired feeling;
- dry mouth;
- sore throat, cough;
- nausea, constipation; or
- headache.

### **What storage conditions are needed for this medicine?**

Different brands/strengths of this medication may have different storage requirements. Read the package labeling or ask your pharmacist for the storage requirements for the product you are using. Protect from light. Do not store in the bathroom. Keep all medicines away from children and pets.

### **In case of emergency/overdose**

If overdose is suspected, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

**What other information should I know?**

Cetirizine can cause side effects that may impair your thinking or reactions. Be careful if you drive or do anything that requires you to be awake and alert.

Avoid drinking alcohol. It can increase some of the side effects of cetirizine.

Tell your doctor if you regularly use other medicines that make you sleepy (such as other cold or allergy medicine, narcotic pain medicine, sleeping pills, muscle relaxers, and medicine for seizures, depression, or anxiety). They can add to sleepiness caused by cetirizine.

Call your doctor if your symptoms do not improve, if they get worse, or if you also have a fever.

