PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Acetaminophen, Diphenhydramine, and Phenylephrine

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Benadryl Allergy and Cold [OTC] [DSC]; Benadryl Allergy and Sinus Headache [OTC] [DSC]; Benadryl Maximum Strength Severe Allergy and Sinus Headache [OTC] [DSC]; Cold Control PE [OTC]; Delsym Children's Cough+Cold Night Time [OTC]; Delsym Cough+Cold Night Time [OTC] [DSC]; Dimetapp Children's Multi-Symptom Cold & Flu [OTC]; GoodSense Nighttime Flu & Severe Cold & Cough [OTC]; GoodSense Severe Allergy Relief Plus Sinus Headache [OTC]; Mucinex Fast-Max Night Time Cold & Flu [OTC]; Mucinex Sinus-Max Night Time [OTC] [DSC]; One Tab Allergy & Sinus [OTC]; One Tab Cold & Flu [OTC]; Robitussin Peak Cold Nighttime Multi-Symptom Cold [OTC] [DSC]; Robitussin Severe Multi-Symptom Cough Cold + Flu Nighttime [OTC]; Sudafed PE Nighttime Cold [OTC] [DSC]; Sudafed PE Severe Cold [OTC] [DSC]; Theraflu ExpressMax Flu Cough & Sore Throat [OTC]; Theraflu ExpressMax Nighttime Severe Cold & Cough [OTC]; Theraflu Nighttime Severe Cold & Cough [OTC]; Theraflu Nighttime Severe Cold [OTC]; Theraflu Sugar-Free Nighttime Severe Cold & Cough [OTC]; Theraflu Warming Relief Flu & Sore Throat [OTC]; Tylenol Allergy Multi-Symptom Nighttime [OTC]

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to ease pain and fever.
- It is used to treat nose stuffiness.

- It is used to ease allergy signs.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child has liver disease.
- If your child has taken certain drugs for depression or certain other health problems in the last 14 days. This includes isocarboxazid, phenelzine, or tranylcypromine. Very high blood pressure may happen.
- If your child is taking any of these drugs: Linezolid or methylene blue.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe to give this drug with all of your child's other drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Do not give your child more of this drug than what the doctor told you to give. Giving more of this drug than you are told may raise the chance of severe side effects.
- Do not have your child use longer than you have been told by your child's doctor.
- Alcohol may interact with this drug. Be sure your child does not drink alcohol.

- Talk with your child's doctor before your child uses marijuana, other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC drugs that may slow your child's actions.
- Do not give your child other products that have diphenhydramine.
- Avoid giving your child other products that have acetaminophen in them. Check labels closely. Too much acetaminophen may cause liver problems.
- This drug has acetaminophen in it. Liver problems have happened with the use of acetaminophen. Sometimes, this has led to a liver transplant or death. Most of the time, liver problems happened in people taking too much acetaminophen in a day. People were also often taking more than 1 drug that had acetaminophen in it. If you have questions, talk with your child's doctor.
- Follow the directions exactly. Do not give your child more acetaminophen in a day than directed. If you do not know how much acetaminophen you can give to your child in a day, ask your child's doctor or pharmacist. Call your child's doctor right away if you have given your child too much acetaminophen in a day, even if your child feels well.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your child's health care providers and lab workers that your child takes this drug.
- If your child has phenylketonuria (PKU), talk with your child's doctor. Some products have phenylalanine.
- If your child is on a low-sodium or sodium-free diet, talk with the doctor. Some of these products have sodium.
- If the patient is a child, use this drug with care. The risk of feeling excitable may be higher in children.
- Different brands of this drug may have different doses for children. Talk with the doctor before giving this drug to a child.
- Have your child avoid tasks or actions that call for alertness until you see how this drug affects your child. These are things like riding a bike, playing sports, or using items such as scissors, lawnmowers, electric scooters, toy cars, or motorized vehicles.

If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:

- Talk with the doctor if your child is pregnant, becomes pregnant, or is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to your child and the baby.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child's doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Not able to pass urine or change in how much urine is passed.
- A severe skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause severe health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if your child has signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Feeling dizzy or sleepy.

- Feeling nervous and excitable.
- Trouble sleeping.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All products:

- Give this drug with or without food. Give with food if it causes an upset stomach.

All liquid products:

- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

Powder:

- Dissolve 1 packet in hot water. Have your child sip while hot.
- If using a microwave, dissolve 1 packet in cool water. Microwave until hot. Do not overheat. Stir before and after heating.

Pods:

- Do not take the foil off of the pod before using. Place the pod in the brewer. Use at least 8 ounces (240 mL) of water. After using the brewer, the pod will be hot and may drip. Handle with care.
- Have your child sip while hot. Have your child drink within 10 to 15 minutes of brewing.

- Only use the type of brewer that you have been told to use. If you are not sure what type of brewer to use, talk with the doctor or pharmacist.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- If your child takes this drug on a regular basis, give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- Many times this drug is given on an as needed basis. Do not give to your child more often than told by the doctor.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

All products:

- Store at room temperature.
- Protect from heat.
- Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

Pods:

- Store in pouch until ready for use.

General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2023-02-02

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Acetaminophen, Diphenhydramine, and Phenylephrine - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center