



Cetirizine hydrochloride for hay fever

This leaflet is about the use of cetirizine hydrochloride for hay fever.

This leaflet has been written specifically about the use of this medicine in children. The information may differ from that provided by the manufacturer. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

Name of drug

Cetirizine

Brand name: Benadryl®, Piriteze, Zirtek

Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?

Hay fever is an allergic reaction to pollen. The body releases a chemical called histamine, which causes symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose and itchy, watery eyes. Cetirizine blocks the effects of histamine and so reduces the symptoms of hay fever.

People get hay fever at different times of the year depending on the type of pollen they are allergic to. Your child should take cetirizine regularly during their allergy season when the pollen count is high, which will help to keep symptoms under control.

What is cetirizine available as?

- **Tablets:** 10 mg
- **Liquid medicine:** 5 mg in 5 mL

When should I give cetirizine?

Cetirizine is usually given once or twice each day.

- If given once each day, it can be given in the morning or the evening. If it makes your child drowsy, it may be better to give it in the evening.
- If cetirizine is given twice each day, give once in the morning and once in the evening. Ideally, these times are 10–12 hours apart, for example some time between 7 and 8 am, and between 7 and 8 pm.

Give the medicine at about the same time(s) each day so that this becomes part of your child's daily routine, which will help you to remember.

How much should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of cetirizine (the dose) that is right for *your* child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.

 **It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions about how much to give.**

How should I give it?



Tablets should be swallowed with a glass of water, milk or juice. Your child should not chew the tablet.

You can crush the tablet and mix it with a small amount of soft food such as yogurt, honey or jam. Make sure your child swallows it straight away, without chewing.



Liquid medicine: Measure out the right amount using a medicine spoon or oral syringe. You can get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount.

When should the medicine start working?

Cetirizine starts to work within 30 - 60 minutes after being taken.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after having a dose of cetirizine, give them the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after having a dose of cetirizine, you **do not** need to give them another dose. Wait until the next normal dose.

What if I forget to give it?

If you normally give it once a day in the morning

- Give the missed dose when you remember during the day.

If you normally give it once a day in the evening

- If you remember before bedtime, give the missed dose. If you remember after this, you do not need to wake your child up to give them the missed dose. You can give the missed dose in the morning, as long as this is at least 12 hours before the evening dose is due.

If you normally give it twice a day

- If you remember up to 4 hours after you should have given a dose, give your child the missed dose. For example, if you usually give a dose at about 7 am, you can give the missed dose at any time up to 11 am. If you remember after that time, **do not** give the missed dose. Wait until the next normal dose.

What if I give too much?

It is unlikely that you will do harm if you give your child an extra dose of cetirizine by accident. If you are worried that you may have given your child too much, contact your doctor or NHS Direct (0845 4647). Have the medicine packet with you if you telephone for advice.

Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children better, but sometimes they have other effects that we don't want (side-effects).

Side-effects you must do something about

-  If your child gets palpitations (they may feel a fluttery feeling in chest or say that their heart is racing), contact your doctor straight away or take your child to hospital.

Other side-effects you need to know about

- Your child may feel sleepy, drowsy or sluggish after taking cetirizine. This can last for a few hours, so it may be better to give cetirizine in the evening rather than the morning.
- Your child may get a dry mouth. Eating citrus fruits (e.g. oranges) or taking sips of water may help.
- Your child's eyesight may be blurred (fuzzy).
- Your child may have constipation (difficulty doing a poo, or doing a poo less often than usual). Encourage them to drink plenty of fluid and to eat foods that contain fibre (e.g. wholemeal foods, fruit and vegetables). If this is still a problem after 2 weeks, contact your doctor.
- Your child may find that they urinate (do a wee) less often, or have difficulty doing a wee.
- Your child may feel light headed and faint (dizziness). Encourage them not to stand up too quickly, and to sit or lie down if they feel dizzy.
- They may get headaches when they first start taking cetirizine.

Can other medicines be given at the same time as cetirizine?

- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

Is there anything else I need to know about cetirizine?

- If your child continues to get symptoms of hay fever, contact your doctor. They may consider other treatments.
- Symptoms of eczema and asthma may get worse during the hay fever season. If this happens, contact your doctor.

General advice about medicines

- Try to give medicines at about the same times each day, to help you remember.
- Only give this medicine to your child. Never give it to anyone else, even if their condition appears to be the same, as this could do harm.
- If you think someone else may have taken the medicine by accident, contact your doctor for advice.
- Make sure that the medicine you have at home has not reached the 'best before' or 'use by' date on the packaging. Give old medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where I should keep this medicine?

- Keep the medicine in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight. It does not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your doctor, pharmacist or nurse will be able to give you more information about cetirizine and about other medicines used to treat hay fever.

You can also get useful information from:

NHS Direct (England)

0845 4647 - www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

NHS 24 (Scotland)

08454 24 24 24 - www.nhs24.com

NHS Direct Wales/Galw Iechyd Cymru

0845 4647 - www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

NI Direct (Northern Ireland)

www.nidirect.gov.uk

Allergy UK

01322 619 898 - www.allergyuk.org

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



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The primary source for the information in this leaflet is the British National Formulary for Children. For details on any other sources used for this leaflet, please contact us through our website, www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk

We take great care to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is important that you ask the advice of your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure about something. This leaflet is about the use of these medicines in the UK, and may not apply to other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), the Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading this leaflet.