

Diphenhydramine

Benadryl® is another name for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

- Diphenhydramine is primarily used to treat signs associated with allergic reactions to drugs, or to environmental allergens.
- Diphenhydramine may be used as a treatment or preventative for motion sickness.
- Diphenhydramine may be given to your pets as an injection prior to chemotherapy to prevent vomiting or allergic reactions from chemotherapy drugs.
- It is occasionally used as a tranquilizer to calm excited animals or to treat signs (such as tremors or rigidity) associated with certain drugs or toxins.

Are There Conditions or Times When Its Use Might Cause More Harm Than Good?

- Diphenhydramine should be used with caution in patients with glaucoma, as it may worsen this condition.
- Diphenhydramine should also be used with caution in animals that have problems urinating, have prostate enlargement, thyroid problems or heart disease.
- Working dogs (e.g., guide dogs, search dogs, hunting dogs, sled dogs, rescue dogs) may become overly sedated and unable to perform their duties while on this drug.
- If your animal has any of the above conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks of using the medication versus the benefits that it might have.

What Side Effects Can Be Seen With Its Use?

- The most common side effect, which is desirable in many cases, is sleepiness and sedation. Most animals will become tolerant to this effect with time and the sleepiness will wear off.
- Dry mouth and inability to urinate are also a possible side effect.
- Infrequently, diphenhydramine may cause gastrointestinal distress such as vomiting, decreased appetite or diarrhea.
- Cats may become unusually excited while taking this drug.
- Animals receiving diphenhydramine will have a reduced response to allergy testing. Diphenhydramine should be stopped at least 4 days before allergy tests are started.

How Should It Be Given?

- The successful outcome of your animal's treatment with this medication depends upon your commitment and ability to administer it exactly as the veterinarian has prescribed. If you have difficulty giving any doses, please do not skip doses or stop giving the medication. Consult your veterinarian or pharmacist, who can offer administration techniques or change the dosage form to a type of medication that may be more acceptable to you and your animal.
- Most cats despise the taste of diphenhydramine liquid and getting cats to accept this drug is a challenge.
- If you miss a dose of this medication, you should give it as soon as you remember it, but if it is within a few hours of the regularly scheduled dose, wait and give it at the regular time. Do not double a dose, as this can be toxic to your pet.
- Some other drugs can interact with this medication, so tell your veterinarian about any drugs or foods that you currently give your animal. Do not give new foods or medications without first asking your veterinarian.
- Dogs and Cats: Dogs and cats usually receive this drug orally up to three times daily as a tablet, capsule or liquid.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Diphenhydramine should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- Keep at room temperature, do not allow the liquid to freeze.

References:

Plumb Veterinary Drug Handbook