

Over-the-Counter Non-Sedating Antihistamines

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If you are one of the 20-45 million people in the United States who suffer from seasonal allergy symptoms, treating your runny nose, nasal congestion, sneezing, itchy eyes, ears, nose, and/or throat has just become more convenient.

Though traditional antihistamine products that have been available over-the-counter work well to fight allergy symptoms, some have proven to cause drowsiness or sedation and even have warnings contraindicating their use while driving or operating machinery. There are also multiple medications available known as non-sedating antihistamines which represent a breakthrough in this field as they are less likely to cause these sedating symptoms, but until recently have only been available by prescription.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has now approved Claritin[®] (loratadine) and Zyrtec[®] (cetirizine) as over-the-counter (OTC) allergy drug products. You can now treat your allergy symptoms more quickly and at a lower cost.

There are multiple manufacturers of the OTC loratadine products available on the market including the OTC Claritin[®] brand. These products are available in five formulations to best meet your allergy needs. There is the traditional tablet formulation (OTC Claritin[®] Tablets), a dissolvable tablet (OTC Claritin RediTabs[®] or Alavert[®]), a fruit-flavored syrup (OTC Claritin[®] Syrup), and finally there are the combination tablets that contain the loratadine along with a decongestant to relieve a variety of allergy symptoms (OTC Claritin-D[®] 24-Hour and OTC Claritin-D[®] 12-Hour).

The OTC Zyrtec[®] also comes in multiple formulations including the traditional tablet formulation (OTC Zyrtec[®]), a children's formulation in either a chewable tablet (OTC Zyrtec[®] Chewables) or a syrup (OTC Zyrtec[®] Syrup), and also in the combination tablet formulation with a decongestant (OTC Zyrtec-D[®]).

Before utilizing a non-sedating antihistamine product for allergies, you should make sure you have allergies and not a cold. Allergies and colds have similar symptoms. You most likely have an allergy if: you have no fever or muscle aches; your mucous secretions are clear and runny; your sneezes occur in rapid, multiple sequence; or you have itchiness in your ears, nose, and throat. Generally, symptoms of seasonal allergies last longer than a cold; however, if you are in doubt about whether you have a cold or allergies, consult a doctor or pharmacist.

If you have renal or hepatic impairment (liver or kidney disease), you should contact your doctor before utilizing any of these products, as you may need a different dosage of these medications. Please consult your doctor or pharmacist if you are pregnant or breast-feeding before utilizing any of these products. Due to the pseudoephedrine component of OTC Zyrtec[®] and OTC Claritin-D[®], caution should be used if you have hypertension, diabetes mellitus, ischemic heart disease, increased intraocular pressure, hyperthyroidism, renal impairment, or prostatic hypertrophy. You should consult your doctor or pharmacist prior to taking this medication if you have one of the above listed conditions. If you have had an allergic reaction to any of the components in OTC Zyrtec[®], OTC Claritin[®], or Alavert[®], you should not use these products.

If You Are Taking:

Clarinet[®] 5mg Tablets¹
Allegra[®] 60mg Tablets³ • Allegra[®] 180mg Tablets³



OTC Loratadine Tablet products³
(OTC Claritin[®] Tablets) or
OTC Zyrtec[®]

Clarinet[®] 5mg Tablets¹ • Clarinet RediTabs^{®1}
Allegra[®] 60mg Tablets³ • Allegra[®] 180mg Tablets³



OTC Loratadine Dissolving Tablet products³
(OTC Claritin RediTabs^{®3} or Alavert^{®3}) or
OTC Zyrtec[®] Chewables

Clarinet[®] Syrup²



OTC Loratadine Syrup⁴ (OTC Clarinet[®] Syrup) or
OTC Zyrtec[®] Syrup

Allegra-D[®] Tablets¹



OTC Loratadine with Decongestant – 24-Hour Tablets¹
(OTC Clarinet-D[®] 24-Hour¹) or OTC Zyrtec-D[®]
OTC Loratadine with Decongestant – 12-Hour Tablets¹
(OTC Clarinet-D[®] 12-Hour) or OTC Zyrtec-D^{™6}

¹For use in adults and children 12 years of age and older

²For use in children 6 months of age and older

³For use in adults and children 6 years of age and older

⁴For use in children 2 years of age and older

Over-the-Counter Proton Pump Inhibitor

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If you are one of the more than 60 million people in the United States who suffer heartburn, it is good to know that there are options for over-the-counter (OTC) treatments for your symptoms. Traditional H2-receptor antagonist products such as Pepcid[®], Zantac[®], Axid[®], and Tagamet[®] and antacids including Tums[®], Rolaids[®], and Maalox[®] have been available for some time. While these agents are generally effective, they only last for a short period of time and multiple doses per day are usually needed.

Recently, the Food and Drug Administration approved Prilosec[®] (omeprazole) as an OTC heartburn drug product. Prilosec is the first Proton Pump Inhibitor (PPI) to become available over the counter and it works by blocking pumps in your stomach that produce acid. Each dose works up to 24 hours, providing consistent, all-day and all-night relief. Prilosec OTC is approved for use in people 18 years or older and is available in 20 mg tablets which can be taken once daily for 14 days. It may take one to four days to see the full effect of this medication.

If You Are Taking:

Ask Your Doctor or Pharmacist About:

Aciphex[®]
Nexium[®]
Omeprazole[®]
Prevacid[®]
Prilosec[®]
Protonix[®]



Prilosec OTC[®]

Prilosec should be taken for only 14 days at a time and the 14-day course should not be repeated for at least four months unless otherwise directed by a doctor. Prescription Prilosec[®] is approved for treating ulcers, hypersecretory conditions, and GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), but you should not take Prilosec OTC for these conditions without first consulting your doctor.

Prilosec is generally well-tolerated with headache, dizziness, constipation or diarrhea, stomach pain and upset stomach, or vomiting being the most common side effects. However, before using Prilosec OTC, it is recommended to consult with your doctor if:

- you have had heartburn for over three months or if you have light-headedness, sweating, dizziness, frequent chest pain, pain spreading to your arms, neck or shoulders, frequent wheezing with your heartburn, stomach pain, unexplained weight loss, nausea or vomiting.
- you have trouble or pain when swallowing food, vomiting with blood, or bloody or black stools.
- you are taking blood-thinning medications such as warfarin, prescription medicines for fungal or yeast infections, diazepam, or digoxin.
- you are pregnant or breast-feeding.

There are some things you can do to try to avoid heartburn besides taking medicine. Avoid foods that aggravate heartburn including alcohol, chocolate, orange or tomato juice, coffee, and spicy foods. Eat smaller meals and avoid eating immediately before lying down or sleeping. Elevate the head of your bed or sleep with your head elevated on pillows or a wedge. Quitting smoking and losing weight may also help to avoid heartburn.

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