

Hydroxyzine

(hye-drox-i-zeen)

Category: Antihistamine

Other Names for this Medication: Atarax®, Vistaril®

Common Dosage Forms: Veterinary: None. **Human:** 10 mg, 25 mg, & 50 mg tablets; 10 mg/5 mL (2 mg/mL) oral liquid; 25 mg/5 mL (5 mg/mL) oral suspension.

This information sheet does not contain all available information for this medication. It is to help answer commonly asked questions and help you give the medication safely and effectively to your animal. If you have other questions or need more information about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.

Key Information

- ▶ **Use only products that contain hydroxyzine as a single active ingredient.** Any other ingredients (eg, pain relievers, decongestants) found in human-label combination products can be toxic to animals.
- ▶ Antihistamines are normally used on an ongoing basis in animals that respond to them. They work better if used before exposure to an allergen (eg, pollens).
- ▶ Most common side effect is drowsiness or sleepiness, but this may be useful in itchy animals.
- ▶ Dry mouth, decreased gastrointestinal activity, and trouble urinating are possible.
- ▶ May be given with or without food. If your animal drools, vomits, or acts sick after getting it on an empty stomach, give with food or small treat to see if this helps. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.

How is this medication useful?

Allergies cause histamine release, which causes itchy skin. Hydroxyzine blocks histamine's effects to reduce itchiness associated with allergies. It can also be used as treatment for itching related to certain types of cancers (eg, mast cell tumors). Like other antihistamines, the response to this drug can vary between animals and be unpredictable, so your veterinarian may try several different antihistamines to see which one works best for your animal. Hydroxyzine may be used with another antihistamine to improve its effects.

The FDA (U.S. Food & Drug Administration) has approved this drug for use in humans, but it is not officially approved for use in animals. The FDA allows veterinarians to prescribe products containing this drug in different species or for other conditions in certain situations. You and your veterinarian can discuss why this drug is the most appropriate choice.

What should I tell my veterinarian to see if this medication can be safely given?

Many things might affect how well this drug will work in your animal. Be sure to discuss the following with your veterinarian so together you can make the best treatment decisions.

- ▶ Other drugs can interact with hydroxyzine, so be sure to tell your veterinarian and pharmacist what medications (including vitamins, supplements, or herbal therapies) you give your animal, including the amount and time you give each.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian about any conditions or diseases your pet may have now or has had in the past.

- ▶ If your animal has been treated for the same disease or condition in the past, tell your veterinarian about the treatment and how well it did or didn't work.
- ▶ If your animal is pregnant or nursing, talk to your veterinarian about the risks of using this drug.
- ▶ Tell your veterinarian and pharmacist about any medication side effects (including allergic reactions, lack of appetite, diarrhea, itching, hair loss) your pet has developed in the past.

When should this medication not be used or be used very carefully?

No drug is 100% safe in all patients, but your veterinarian will discuss with you any specific concerns about using this drug in your animal.

This drug **SHOULD NOT** be used in patients with:

- ▶ A history of allergic reactions to it or cetirizine.
- ▶ Appointments for allergy testing. Antihistamines interfere with the results of allergy testing. Talk with your veterinarian about when to stop giving the drug.
- ▶ With an enlarged prostate, bladder blockage, severe heart disease, or stomach obstruction.

This drug should be used **WITH CAUTION** in animals:

- ▶ With a seizure disorder. Hydroxyzine has caused seizures in some dogs and probably should not be used in dogs with a history of seizures.
- ▶ That have problems urinating or appear constipated.
- ▶ With prostatic enlargement, thyroid problems, or heart disease.
- ▶ With severe kidney or liver disease.
- ▶ Who are old.
- ▶ With glaucoma as it may make the condition worse.
- ▶ Working dogs (eg, guide dogs, search dogs, hunting dogs, sled dogs, rescue dogs), as they may become sleepy and unable to perform their duties.
- ▶ Who are pregnant or nursing mothers. Hydroxyzine has caused birth defects in laboratory animals, so it should probably not be used during pregnancy. Hydroxyzine should be used very carefully in nursing mothers, as it is unknown whether the drug crosses into the milk.

If your pet has any of these conditions or signs, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks versus benefits.

What are the side effects of this medication?

Side effects that usually are not serious include:

- ▶ Sedation (sleepiness, fatigue) is the most common side effect. Most animals will become tolerant to this effect with time and will not get as sleepy when given the medication.

- ▶ Excitement. Occasionally, hydroxyzine causes some animals to become overly excited.
- ▶ Dogs: Muscle tremors (uncommon).
- ▶ Cats: Greater thirst, behavior changes (uncommon).
- ▶ Lack of appetite, low blood pressure (uncommon).

You don't have to be overly concerned if you see any of these unless they are severe, worsen, or continue to be a problem. Contact your veterinarian if this happens.

Side effects that may be serious or indicate a serious problem:

- ▶ Dogs: Seizures. These are rare; contact your veterinarian immediately if they occur.

If my pet gets too much of this medication (an overdose), what should I do?

Small overdoses of hydroxyzine are usually not serious, but larger overdoses may be serious. Excessive drowsiness, excitability, tremors, stumbling, collapsing (passing out), higher body temperature, or seizures are all signs of possible overdose. If you witness or suspect an overdose, contact your veterinarian or an animal poison control center immediately for further advice. Animal poison control centers that are open 24 hours a day include: **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** (888-426-4435) and **Pet Poison HELPLINE** (855-764-7661); a consultation fee is charged for these services.

How should this medication be given?

For this medication to work, give it exactly as your veterinarian has prescribed. It's a good idea to always check the prescription label to be sure you are giving the drug correctly.

- ▶ Hydroxyzine may be given either with food or on an empty stomach. If your pet vomits or acts sick after receiving the drug on an empty stomach, try giving the next dose with food or a small treat. If vomiting continues, contact your veterinarian.
- ▶ Liquid forms of this medication must be measured carefully. Your veterinarian or pharmacist can help by providing special measuring spoons or syringes. Shake the oral suspension well before each use.
- ▶ If you have difficulty getting your animal to take the medicine, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist for tips to help with dosing and reducing the stress of medication time.
- ▶ Patients are usually on this medication for an extended period, often for the rest of their lives. Give this medication according to the label's instructions and obtain refills as needed. Before stopping this medication, talk to your veterinarian, as there may be important reasons to continue its use.

What should I do if I miss giving a dose of this medication?

If you miss a dose, give it when you remember, but if it is close to the time for the next dose, skip the dose you missed and give it at the next scheduled time. After that, return to the regular dosing schedule. Do not double-up or give extra doses.

How should I store this medication?

- ▶ Store this medication in the original prescription bottle or an approved dosage reminder container (ie, pill minder) at room temperature. Do not allow liquid forms to freeze.
- ▶ If your veterinarian or pharmacist has made (compounded) a special formulation for your animal, follow the storage recommendations and expiration date for the product.
- ▶ Keep away from children and other animals.

Can handling this medication be hazardous to me, my family, or other pets?

There are no specific precautions required when handling this medication unless you are allergic to it. Wash your hands after handling any medication.

How should I dispose of this medication if I don't use it all?

- ▶ Do not flush this medication down the toilet or wash it down the sink. If a community drug "take-back" program is available, use this option. If there is no take-back program, mix the drug with coffee grounds or cat litter (to make it undesirable to children and animals and unrecognizable to people who might go through your trash), place the mixture in a sealable plastic bag to keep it from leaking out, and throw the bag out with the regular trash.
- ▶ Do not save left over medication for future use or give it to others to use.

What other information is important for this medication?

- ▶ Because this drug can cause dry mouth, be sure your animal has access to water at all times.
- ▶ Use of this drug may not be allowed in certain animal competitions. Check rules and regulations before entering your animal in a competition while this medication is being administered.

If you have any other questions or concerns about this medication, contact your veterinarian or pharmacist.