

MARBLE VALLEY HEALTHWORKS
Personalized Medical Practice

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**ANTIHISTAMINES:
 WHAT'S THE BUZZ?**

Antihistamines are a group of medicines used to treat the symptoms of allergy. Allergy symptoms (itchy, red, runny eyes; itchy, congested, runny nose; sneezing; raised, red, itchy rash) occur when allergens such as pollen or pet dander touch a person who is sensitive to them. Mast cells in the eye, nose or skin tissue that are activated by allergens release histamine, a chemical that makes nearby blood vessels loose and leaky. Surrounding tissue becomes swollen, red and boggy. Antihistamines block allergens from activating histamine receptors, thereby lessening the allergic reaction.

Antihistamines are divided into two general groups, based on their ability to cross over from the blood stream to brain tissue (the so-called "blood-brain barrier"). Older ("non-selective" or "first generation") antihistamines tend to cross the blood-brain barrier easily where they activate other receptors in brain tissue and cause drowsiness. Newer ("selective" or "second generation") antihistamines don't cross the blood-brain barrier as well, and therefore cause little to no drowsiness.

Here is a list of common antihistamines available over the counter:

	<u>Generic names</u>	<u>Brand Names</u>
Non-selective:	diphenhydramine	<i>Benadryl</i>
	chlorpheniramine	<i>Chlor-Trimeton</i>
	brompheniramine	<i>Dimetapp</i>
	dimenhydrinate	<i>Dramamine</i>
	doxylamine	<i>Nyquil</i>
	clemastine	<i>Tavist</i>
Selective:	cetirizine	<i>Zyrtec</i>
	loratadine	<i>Claritin, Alavert</i>
	fexofenadine	<i>Allegra</i>



Antihistamines are generally safe and thus available over the counter. However, there are precautions of which you should be aware. (This list is incomplete. Ask your provider or pharmacist if you have concerns about side effects or interactions with other medicines.)

Non-selective antihistamines are so effective at making most people drowsy that they are widely sold as sleeping pills, such as Somnex, Tylenol PM and Advil PM. Sedation from non-selective antihistamines makes them difficult for many people to take during the day. They should be avoided when driving and by others who need to be alert. Older people are more sensitive to the effects on the brain, and can become confused as well as drowsy.

Sedation from antihistamines is compounded by alcohol, sedatives and other sleep medicines. Using them simultaneously can be dangerous.

Some medical conditions can be aggravated by non-selective antihistamines. People should avoid them if they have glaucoma, symptoms of prostate swelling (difficulty urinating) or poorly controlled asthma, emphysema, thyroid conditions, heart disease and hypertension.

Some people report appetite stimulation and weight gain with regular use of non-selective antihistamines.

Selective antihistamines tend to not cause drowsiness, but cetirizine crosses the blood-brain barrier more readily than the other selective antihistamines and is therefore mildly sedating to some people.

All antihistamines are recommended to be avoided by people who have serious liver or kidney disease.

Another precaution related to antihistamines is that they are often combined with other over the counter drugs, like decongestants, anti-inflammatory medicines and pain relievers.

Decongestants like pseudoephedrine and phenylephrine are included in many allergy and cold remedies. They have stimulating effects like insomnia, jitters, nervousness and palpitations. People with heart conditions and high blood pressure should avoid these. These allergy products are usually designated by "D" in their name, like "Allegra-D," "Claritin-D," etc.

Anti-inflammatory medicines (ibuprofen [Motrin, Advil], naproxen [Aleve, Naprosyn]) are combined with antihistamines to make night time pain medicines. They can irritate the stomach, cause ulcers and injure weakened kidneys. These are often designated with a "PM" suffix, like "Aleve PM" and "Advil PM."

Antihistamines are often combined with acetaminophen (Tylenol). Acetaminophen is generally very safe, but is included in so many over the counter and prescription medicines that special care is necessary to avoid unintentionally overdosing, which can seriously damage the liver. Daily intake of acetaminophen should never be more than 4,000 mg for a healthy adult. Those with liver disease should avoid it altogether.

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN FROM FALLS

Unintentional falls are the leading cause of nonfatal injuries in children in the United States. It is estimated that 2.8 million children are treated yearly in the emergency room for injuries related to falls. These typically occur in the warmer months. For children, less than 4 years old, 80 % of the injuries tend to occur in the home. For children between the ages of 5 and 14, half of the falls take place in the home and one quarter in school. The mechanisms of injury vary by age. Infants are more likely to sustain injuries related to falls from furniture or down stairs. Toddlers are at risk of falls from windows. Older children tend to suffer more injuries related to playground equipment.

Here are some fast facts about childhood falls:

- * It is estimated that 12 children in the United States perish each year from falls from windows. These children are less than 10 years old. There are 4,000 emergency room visits each year for falls from windows.
- * Baby walkers tip over and cause injuries, but most baby walker injuries occur from falling down stairs.
- * In 2013, infant carriers were associated with 66 % of the injuries seen in emergency rooms in children less than 5 years old. A large percent of these children were not buckled into their seats.
- * Falls from furniture in children are more common when children are less than 5 years old. Children can also fall from the top bunk bed while sleeping.
- * Falls in bathtubs occur even with adult supervision.
- * Approximately 153,400 children per year visit emergency rooms for injuries due to playground falls. In addition, 17 children die each year from injuries related to playground equipment.
- * There are 20,000 children treated yearly for falls from shopping carts. Children either fall from the cart or the cart tips over.
- * There are roughly 200 deaths per year from falling from the cargo area of pickup trucks. Of these, 1/2 the deaths are children.
- * Other types of falls occur with recreational activities. These include inline skating, skate boarding and using scooters. In 2010, 3,500 emergency room visits were related to falls while inline skating, 60,000 visits were related to skateboarding and 42,000 visits were related to falls from scooters.

While we all would love to place our children in a bubble to protect them, they deserve to have some fun. Here are some ideas on prevention of falls.

Unfortunately, window screens do not prevent falls. One suggestion is to install window guards on all windows. Alternatively, windows can be opened a maximum of 4 inches. Other considerations for prevention of falls are to open double hung windows from the top only, avoid placing furniture near a window, keep windows closed in rooms where children play, and of course to supervise young children.

In regards to baby walkers, unfortunately, the use of stair gates has little effect on the prevention of falls. In one study, 88 % of the baby walker injuries seen in an emergency room were related to falling down the stairs and of those injuries, 1/3 of the families had stair gates. In follow up phone calls to these families two months later, two-thirds of the children had still been using the walker. If one chooses to allow their child to use a baby walker, the American Association of Pediatrics has recommendations. The walker should meet the standards of safety of the American Society for Testing and Materials, be wider than a 36-inch doorway, and have a brake if more than 1 wheel drops off the floor.

If toddlers are on furniture, they should be supervised at all times. In addition, guardrails should be installed on beds and no children less than 6 years old should be allowed to sleep in a top bunk bed. Infant seats should be placed on the floor, not on tables or counters. If infants are in their infant seat, their belt should be buckled.

For bath time, consider using slip resistant devices such as a bath mat. When shopping, and using a shopping cart, children should wear the seatbelt, not ride in the basket or stand in the cart. The shopping cart should be pushed by an adult.

There are guidelines to ensure safety of playground equipment. Ropes should be secured at both ends to prevent strangulation. Additional equipment that could cause a strangulation hazard should not be attached. These include jump ropes, dog leashes, and chains. Guardrails should be placed on platforms higher than 30 "and protective barriers placed around platforms higher than 48". In addition, appropriate surfacing material needs to be used. Acceptable are shredded rubber, hardwood fiber, mulch, chips, or sand to a 12" depth. Materials to avoid are asphalt, concrete and grass.

It seems obvious, but there should never be travel allowed in the cargo area of a pick-up truck. Planning trips with adequate seats for everyone is a must.

Finally, our children want to have fun recreationally. Using appropriate protective equipment is important. Helmets, elbow pads, and knee pads should always be used when inline skating, skateboarding or using a scooter. Learning how to stop is a must. Avoiding traffic is also imperative.

Hopefully these tips help in our ultimate goal of keeping our children safe.



MARBLE VALLEY HEALTHWORKS
is pleased to welcome new Staff members:

REBECCA BLAKE, LPN
and

KRISTYN HENNESSEY, Client Account Rep



PRESCRIPTION REFILLS

Please provide us a minimum of 24 hours notice when your prescription requires refilling. Thank you.