



Antihistamines aren't all created equal

1st generation antihistamines vs
2nd generation antihistamines

Allergic symptoms include sneezing, itching, runny or blocked nose, itching, red and teary eyes, abdominal pains and cramps, itching and flushing of the skin, headache, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, irritability and poor concentration, drowsiness, and in severe cases, breathing difficulties or low blood pressure and anaphylaxis

Available as syrups, tablets, nasal sprays, eye drops, and intravenous formulations antihistamines are the most common drug prescribed in patients with allergic conditions.

Although all antihistamines oppose the action of histamine, they differ quite significantly in their chemical structure, leading to a huge difference in especially their duration of action, side effect profile and the ability to interact with other drugs taken simultaneously.

Antihistamines can conveniently be subdivided into two groups: older (first generation-) antihistamines and newer (second generation-) antihistamines.

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE IN SIDE EFFECTS OF COMMONLY PRESCRIBED ANTIHISTAMINES

	FIRST GENERATION ANTIHISTAMINES	SECOND GENERATION ANTIHISTAMINES
Researched in children	Less extensively researched	Extensively researched
Sedative	Very Sedative	Less sedative or not sedative
Duration of action	Short acting (need to be taken frequently: 3-4 times per day)	Long acting (can be taken once daily)
Dry mouth and constipation	Common occurrence	Less common
Hyperactivity, insomnia, convulsions, reduction in "deep" sleep	Potential exists	Less likely to occur
Increased appetite	Potential exists	Less likely to occur
Serious side effects when taken with other drugs (e.g. antifungals, erythromycin and azithromycin antibiotics)	Common	Unlikely to occur
Poor concentration and impaired learning at work or school	Commonly described	Less likely to occur
Lethal in overdose	Has been described in infants and young children	No fatalities described