

# 9 Zyrtec Side Effects You Should Look Out For This Allergy Season

They're rare but still sucky.

BY JESSICA MIGALA [JASMINE GOMEZ](#) JUN 2, 2021

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If you're stocking up on OTC allergy medicine right now, you're not alone. The [changing of seasons tends to bring on not-so-fun allergy symptoms](#), and daily meds can help so enjoying time outside is NBD, like the popular one Zyrtec.

Zyrtec claims to be the "#1 Allergist Recommended Brand Among OTC Oral Antihistamines" so it probably seems like a safe bet in the pharmacy aisle, and you'd be right about that. "Zyrtec blocks histamines to stop [allergic reactions](#)," says Virginia Boomershine, ambulatory clinical pharmacy regional senior manager for Banner Pharmacy Services. Histamines are substances that cause all those send-you-to-misery-town allergy symptoms.

Zyrtec, in particular, [treats those like](#) runny nose, sneezing, itchy, watery eyes, and itching of the nose or throat. You're supposed to take one tablet per day and it starts working within one hour of consumption. (Yaaaaaass.)

And because it can magically make you feel better, you may be tempted to keep a regular stash of Zyrtec on hand. So, here's what you should know about Zyrtec, potential side effects (more on those in a minute!), who it's right for, and more.

## Is it safe to take Zyrtec every day?

Yep. "When taken in the recommended doses, antihistamines can be taken daily. This is especially true with Zyrtec, since it doesn't show decreasing effectiveness if used daily," says [Sima Patel](#), MD, an allergist at New York Allergy & Sinus Centers.

Zyrtec and other allergy medicines currently on the market are known as second-generation antihistamines, and have fewer and less severe side effects than the "first generation" of allergy medications did. So though you might experience some side effects while on allergy medicine, they shouldn't persist once you've stopped taking it

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...but, it's probably worth noting on medication that you don't need, says Dr. Patel. "If you aren't having allergy symptoms or they get milder during a certain time of the year, that's probably a good time to take a Zyrtec break. "We always want the least amount of medication to control symptoms. However, starting allergy medications two weeks prior to your symptomatic season is best to help prevent symptoms," Dr. Patel says.

Mild side effects may be totally normal, but if you're experiencing severe side effects, or persistent ones that just won't go away, it's best to talk to your doctor before you continue regular use of Zyrtec to see if its right for you.

## Is it better to take Zyrtec in the morning or at night?

It depends on whether you experience any side effects, says [Robert Eitches](#), MD, an allergist at Tower Allergy. If your problems are only during the day time and you aren't really prone to side effects, then go ahead and take it during the day.

But if you experience side effects like drowsiness, Dr. Eitches recommends taking your dose at night before bed. "That way you wake up in the morning relatively clearer, too," he says. If it makes you sleepy, the side effect will have likely worn off by the time you wake up, and since the medication can provide relief for 24 hours, you'll still experience relief during the day.

## Is there anyone who should not take Zyrtec?

Zyrtec is safe for most people, but there are some populations that should stay away from it. Children under 2, anyone with a history of allergic reaction to Zyrtec or hydroxyzine/piperazine derivatives, and people with severe renal impairment are all people who probably shouldn't take Zyrtec, says Dr. Patel. For people with these conditions, Zyrtec can cause adverse health effects.

If you are pregnant and breastfeeding, Dr. Patel recommends speaking to your doctor before using it, since some women have experienced side effects. Dr. Eitches suggests taking it with caution if you're on other medications or take some kind of sleeping aid to help you go to bed.

When in doubt, it's best to go to your doctor with any questions before you take Zyrtec as an allergy medicine.

All things considered though, you're likely to be fine when using Zyrtec, as side effects aren't terribly common,

Boomershine notes. Still, it's best to be aware of potential Zyrtec side effects—especially if you're planning on popping the stuff on the reg over the next few months.

## 9 Zyrtec Side Effects To Be Aware Of

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### 1

#### Drowsiness

If you've ever slept 14 hours after popping a Benadryl, you're well aware that some allergy meds can seriously knock you out. That's not as common with Zyrtec, but 11 to 14 percent of people do report feeling sleepy after taking it, making it the most common side effect reported, says Boomershine.

Since the effects of Zyrtec last 24 hours, drowsiness can hit at any time. Avoid alcohol and be careful about driving if the med hits you with the sleepies, per the [Zyrtec site](#).

### 2

#### Dry Mouth

It's annoying to feel as if you've inhaled a mouthful of sand. Less than 10 percent of Zyrtec poppers will wind up with a dry mouth, says Boomershine. When you have an allergic response, your tissues secrete more fluid (hello runny nose, watery eyes), and antihistamines dry you up. She says that drinking water will help, as will

switching to an alcohol-free mouthwash if you're using one that has alcohol in it, as that ingredient also dries you out.

### 3

#### Dizziness

Dizziness can be a rare potential side effect and may disappear after your body adjusts to the medication, per [The Mayo Clinic](#). Give it time, but always check in with your doctor if you're concerned. And, just like

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### 4

#### Headache

This is one of those side effects that may or may not be attributable to Zyrtec, especially since the causes of [head pain](#) are so multifactorial. If possible, take a break from the med and see if it helps, says Boomershine. If so, you can always chat with a pharmacist to see if there's a different allergy med that may be better for you.

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### 5

#### Nausea

Truth: Just about every med you take can come with the side effect of nausea. It will likely always be listed. “When doing clinical trials, the drug manufacturer has to write down every side effect everyone says happened to them. In terms of Zyrtec, experiencing nausea on the medication happens as commonly as taking a placebo,” she says. So it may be the Zyrtec, it may not be. Taking it with food is always a good way to avoid potential nausea.

## 6

### Insomnia

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the long-acting med earlier in the day won't help either since it lasts all day. Talk to their pediatrician about making a switch.

## 7

### Difficulty breathing or swallowing

It's rare, according to the [National Institutes of Health](#), but keep it on your radar anyway. While you may be taking Zyrtec to prevent allergy symptoms, it's possible to have a potentially deadly allergic reaction called anaphylaxis from the medication itself. (FYI: This is a risk with all medications, not just Zyrtec.) If you experience this, call 911 immediately.

## 8

### Sore throat/cough

If you experience a sore throat while taking Zyrtec, it's likely because your mucus membranes become drier causing the tissues in your mouth to also feel a little drier and lead to a sore throat, says Dr. Eitches. Coughing can be an instinct response to try to moisten the mouth, he explains.

To combat this, stay hydrated. But if this side effect becomes too severe, Dr. Eitches suggests switching to a different antihistamine.

## 9

### Constipation

Constipation is a very rare side effect that happens due to a drug's anticholinergic effect, which means the drug blocks neurotransmitters which affect how the body functions. In this case, certain receptors that help gut

motility are blocked. This side effect was much more common with older, first generation antihistamines such as Benadryl, says Dr. Patel, but Zyrtec is a second-generation antihistamine with less side effects.

If this does happen to you though, Dr. Eitches recommends trying a different antihistamine, adding fiber to your diet, and staying well-hydrated.

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JASMINE GOMEZ Associate Commerce Editor

Jasmine Gomez is the Associate Commerce Editor at Women's Health and covers health, fitness, sex, culture and cool products.

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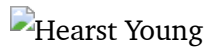
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