

Hydroxyzine

Hydroxyzine is a **first-generation antihistamine** with **anxiolytic**, **sedative**, and **anticholinergic** properties. It is used in the treatment of anxiety, insomnia, pruritus, and as an adjunct in allergic and psychoneurotic conditions.

Classification

- **Drug class:** H1-antihistamine (first-generation)
- **ATC code:** N05BB01
- **Subtypes:**
 - Hydroxyzine hydrochloride (Atarax®)
 - Hydroxyzine pamoate (Vistaril®)

Mechanism of Action

- Antagonist at **histamine H1 receptors** in the CNS and periphery
- Also has effects on **muscarinic**, **serotonergic**, and **dopaminergic** receptors
- Produces **sedation**, **anxiolysis**, and **antiemetic** effects

Indications

- **Anxiety disorders** (short-term treatment)
- **Preoperative sedation**
- **Insomnia** (off-label)
- **Urticaria** and **pruritus**
- **Allergic rhinitis**
- **Tinnitus-related distress** (off-label)

Dosage (Adults)

- **Anxiety:** 25–50 mg up to 4 times daily
- **Pruritus:** 25 mg at night or every 6–8 hours
- **Sedation:** 50–100 mg at bedtime
- **Titrate** based on sedation and tolerability

Adverse Effects

- **Common:** Drowsiness, dry mouth, headache, dizziness, blurred vision
- **Anticholinergic:** Constipation, urinary retention, confusion (especially in elderly)
- **Rare but serious:** QT prolongation, seizures (at high doses)

Contraindications

- Hypersensitivity to hydroxyzine or cetirizine (its active metabolite)
- **Prolonged QT interval** or history of **torsades de pointes**
- **First trimester of pregnancy** (teratogenic risk)

Precautions

- Use with caution in **elderly** (Beers Criteria)
- Avoid in **renal or hepatic impairment** without dose adjustment
- Caution with **other CNS depressants** (alcohol, opioids, benzodiazepines)

Drug Interactions

- **CNS depressants:** Additive sedation
- **QT-prolonging drugs:** Increased risk of arrhythmia
- **MAO inhibitors:** Avoid concomitant use

Clinical Notes

- Considered a **non-addictive alternative** to benzodiazepines for anxiety or sleep
- Onset of action: **~15-30 minutes**
- May impair psychomotor performance; avoid driving

Synonyms and Brand Names

- **Hydroxyzine hydrochloride:** Atarax®
- **Hydroxyzine pamoate:** Vistaril®
- **Metabolite:** Cetirizine (second-generation antihistamine)

Related Topics

- [Antihistamines](#)
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- [Tinnitus and pharmacologic modulation](#)

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