

H-2 Blockers



What is an H2-blocker?

H₂ blockers, or histamine-2 receptor blockers, are medicines that decrease the amount of acid made by the stomach. Histamine, the same chemical that causes congestion in allergies, is

responsible for stimulating acid production in the stomach. When histamine is blocked, acid production decreases.

The acid made in the stomach is one of the first digestive fluids. Normally, the lining of the stomach tolerates this acid environment. The acid will cause an ulcer only when there is a break in the protective lining of the stomach. Ulcers and irritation can also occur in the esophagus as a result of acid reflux.

Are these medicines safe?

All medicines can have side effects in some people. However, H₂-blockers are usually well tolerated and side effects are rare. The most common reported side effects are headaches and stomach pain. Such symptoms go away once the medicine is stopped. Cimetidine can cause breast swelling in boys.

Since acid is needed to digest food, you might wonder if taking an H₂-blocker means you will not digest food normally. Since H₂-blockers do not turn off acid production completely, there is still enough acid to help digest the food.

Are these medicines hard to take?

H₂ blockers are available as pills, chewable pills, and liquids. Your health care provider will help you find the form that is best for your child.

Are there other medicines that decrease stomach acid?

Maalox[®], Mylanta[®] or Gaviscon[®] are liquid or chewable antacids that only neutralize acid for a short time. They are used when symptoms are mild and infrequent.

Proton pump inhibitors, such as Prilosec[®], Nexium[®], Prevacid[®], Aciphex[®], or Protonix[®] are more powerful acid suppressants used to heal severe inflammation or when inflammation has not improved with an H₂-blocker.

The most commonly used H₂-blockers are Zantac, Pepcid, and Tagamet.

Sometimes your child's insurance may ask for a different brand than the one your health care professional originally prescribed. This change should be discussed and approved by your child's health care provider.

For more information or to locate a pediatric gastroenterologist in your area please visit our website at: www.naspgghan.org

IMPORTANT REMINDER: This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general information and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS:



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