Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Chloral Hydrate

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: Canada

Chloral Hydrate Odan; PMS-Chloral Hydrate [DSC]

Warning

- This drug is a benzodiazepine. The use of a benzodiazepine drug along with opioid drugs has led to very bad side effects. Side effects that have happened include slowed or trouble breathing and death. Opioid drugs include drugs like codeine, oxycodone, and morphine. Opioid drugs are used to treat pain and some are used to treat cough. Talk with the doctor.
- If you are taking this drug with an opioid drug, get medical help right away if you feel very sleepy or dizzy; if you have slow, shallow, or trouble breathing; or if you pass out. Caregivers or others need to get medical help right away if the patient does not respond, does not answer or react like normal, or will not wake up.
- Benzodiazepines can put you at risk for addiction, abuse, and misuse. Misuse or abuse of this drug can lead to overdose or death, especially when used along with certain other drugs, alcohol, or street drugs. Addiction can happen even if you take this drug as your doctor has told you. Get medical help right away if you have changes in mood or behavior, suicidal thoughts or actions, seizures, or trouble breathing.

- You will be watched closely to make sure you do not misuse, abuse, or become addicted to this drug.
- Benzodiazepines may cause dependence. Lowering the dose or stopping this drug all of a sudden may cause withdrawal. This can be life-threatening. The risk of dependence and withdrawal are raised the longer you take this drug and the higher the dose. Talk to your doctor before you lower the dose or stop this drug. You will need to follow your doctor's instructions. Get medical help right away if you have trouble controlling body movements, seizures, new or worse behavior or mood changes like depression or thoughts of suicide, thoughts of harming someone, hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there), losing contact with reality, moving around or talking a lot, or any other bad effects.
- Sometimes, withdrawal signs can last for several weeks to more than 12 months. Tell your doctor if you have anxiety; trouble with memory, learning, or focusing; trouble sleeping; burning, numbness, or tingling; weakness; shaking; muscle twitching; ringing in the ears; or any other bad effects.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat sleep problems.
- It is used to ease anxiety and help with sleep before surgery.
- It is used to ease pain after surgery.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you have an allergy to chloral hydrate or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs

you had.

- If you have any of these health problems: Kidney disease, liver disease, esophagus problems, or stomach or bowel problems like swelling, ulcers, or irritation.
- If you have heart problems.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- When sleep drugs are used nightly for more than a few weeks, they may not work as well to help sleep problems. This is known as tolerance. Only use sleep drugs for a short time. If sleep problems last, call the doctor.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert after you take this drug. You may still feel sleepy the day after you take this drug. Avoid these tasks or actions until you feel fully awake.
- Avoid alcohol while taking this drug. Do not take this drug if you drank alcohol that evening or before bed.
- Talk with your doctor before you use marijuana, other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC drugs that may slow your actions.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- This drug may make you feel sleepy and less alert. This may lead to falling. The chance of falling is higher in older people. If you have

questions, talk with the doctor.

- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- If the patient is a child, use this drug with care. The risk of some side effects may be higher in children.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Severe stomach pain.
- Feeling confused.
- Change in how you act.
- Fever, chills, or sore throat.
- Very bad dizziness or passing out.
- A heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- Bad dreams.
- Sleepwalking.
- Trouble breathing, slow breathing, or shallow breathing.
- Trouble walking.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Dizziness.
- Feeling sleepy the next day.
- Diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Gas.
- Bad taste in your mouth.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

For all uses of this drug:

- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.
- This drug may be mixed in $^{1}/_{2}$ glass of water, fruit juice, or ginger ale.

For sleep:

- If you are using this drug to help you sleep, take it 15 to 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Do not take this drug unless you can get a full night’s sleep (at least 7 to 8 hours) before you need to be active again.

If taking this drug for pain:

- Take after meals.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

For sleep:

- If you take this drug on a regular basis, take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If you will not be able to get a full night’s sleep (at least 7 hours) after taking the missed dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- Many times this drug is taken on an as needed basis. Do not take more often than told by the doctor.

If taking this drug for pain:

- Skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

Before surgery:

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Do not freeze.
- Store this drug in a safe place where children cannot see or reach it, and where other people cannot get to it. A locked box or area may help keep this drug safe. Keep all drugs away from pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else’s drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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