Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Diazepam

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ 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: US

Diastat AcuDial [DSC]; Diastat Pediatric [DSC]; diazePAM Intensol; Libervant [DSC]; Valium; Valtoco 10 MG Dose; Valtoco 15 MG Dose; Valtoco 20 MG Dose; Valtoco 5 MG Dose

Brand Names: Canada

Diastat; Valium

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 drug use disorder. Misuse or abuse of this drug can lead to overdose or death, especially when used

along with certain other drugs, alcohol, or street drugs. Drug use disorder 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 this drug or develop drug use disorder.
- 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 relax muscles.
- It is used to treat alcohol withdrawal.
- It is used to treat anxiety.
- It is used to help control certain kinds of seizures.
- 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 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: Breathing problems, glaucoma, liver disease, myasthenia gravis, or sleep apnea.
- If you have psychosis.
- If you have recently drunk a lot of alcohol or taken a drug that may slow your actions like phenobarbital or some pain drugs like oxycodone.
- If you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed. You may need to avoid breast-feeding.
- If the patient is a child. This drug may not be for use in all ages of children.

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?

All products:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert or have clear eyesight until you see how this drug affects you.
- Avoid drinking alcohol while taking this drug.
- Talk with your doctor before you use marijuana, other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC drugs that may slow your actions.

- If seizures are different or worse after starting this drug, talk with the doctor.
- Dizziness, sleepiness, and feeling less stable may happen with this drug. These may lead to falling, which can cause broken bones. The risk of falling is higher in older people and in people who are weak or frail. 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.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant. If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.
- Taking this drug late in pregnancy may raise the chance of breathing or feeding problems, low body temperature, or withdrawal symptoms in the newborn. Talk with the doctor.

Nose spray and rectal gel:

- This drug is not meant for regular, daily use. Talk with the doctor.

All other products:

- Do not change the dose or stop this drug. This could cause seizures. Talk with your doctor.
- Have your blood work checked if you are on this drug for a long time. Talk with your doctor.
- If you have been taking this drug for a long time or at high doses, it may not work as well and you may need higher doses to get the same effect. This is known as tolerance. Call your doctor if this drug stops working well. Do not take more than ordered.

Injection and nose spray:

- Some products have benzyl alcohol. If possible, avoid products with benzyl alcohol in newborns or infants. Serious side effects can happen in these children with some doses of benzyl alcohol, including if given with other drugs that have benzyl alcohol. Talk with the doctor to see if this product has benzyl alcohol in it.

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:

All products:

- 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.
- Shortness of breath.
- Change in balance.
- Feeling confused.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Memory problems or loss.
- Very bad dizziness or passing out.
- Muscle spasm.
- Twitching.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Change in eyesight.
- Slurred speech.

- Upset stomach, throwing up, or loss of appetite that is severe or does not go away.
- Like other drugs that may be used for seizures, this drug may rarely raise the risk of suicidal thoughts or actions. The risk may be higher in people who have had suicidal thoughts or actions in the past. Call the doctor right away about any new or worse signs like depression; feeling nervous, restless, or grouchy; panic attacks; or other changes in mood or behavior. Call the doctor right away if any suicidal thoughts or actions occur.

Injection (I.V.):

- This drug may cause tissue damage if the drug leaks from the vein. Tell your nurse if you have any redness, burning, pain, swelling, blisters, skin sores, or leaking of fluid where the drug is going into your body.

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:

All products:

- Feeling sleepy.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Muscle weakness.

Nose spray and rectal gel:

- Headache.

Nose spray:

- Nose irritation.

Injection:

- Irritation where the shot is given.

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.

All oral products:

- Take with or without food. Take with food if it causes an upset stomach.

Liquid (solution):

- Make sure you have the right liquid; there is more than one strength.
- 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.
- Do not use a household teaspoon or tablespoon to measure this drug. Doing so could lead to the dose being too high.

Liquid (concentrate):

- Make sure you have the right liquid; there is more than one strength.
- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug.
- Mix the liquid with water, juice, soda, applesauce, or pudding before taking

it.

- Swallow the mixture right away. Do not store for use at a later time.

For rectal use:

- If needed, a second dose may be used 4 to 12 hours after the first dose if your doctor has told you to.
- Do not use to treat more than 5 episodes in a month or more than 1 episode every 5 days.
- Check to make sure the right dose is locked in. You will see a green ready band.
- Call the doctor right away if you keep having seizures for 15 minutes after you give this drug, unless your doctor has told you to do something else.

Nose spray:

- If you will be using this drug at home, your doctor or nurse will teach you how to use it.
- Do not take this drug by mouth. Use in your nose only. Keep out of your mouth and eyes (may burn).
- Be sure you know how to use before an emergency happens. Read the package insert and instructions for use that come with this drug. If you have any questions about how to use this drug, talk with the doctor or pharmacist.
- Keep this drug with you at all times. You may want to keep extra ones at work, school, and home.
- Someone else may have to give this drug. Be sure others know where this drug is stored and how to give it if needed.
- Do **not** test or prime before using.
- If needed, a second dose may be used at least 4 hours after the first dose if your doctor has told you to. Do not use more than 2 doses for the same seizure.

- If the seizure does not stop after using this drug, get medical help right away.
- Do not use to treat more than 5 episodes in a month or more than 1 episode every 5 days.
- Each container is for one use only. Use right after opening. Throw away any part of the opened container after the dose is given.

Injection:

- It is given as an injection into a muscle or vein.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

All oral products:

- If you take this drug on a regular basis, take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next 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.

Nose spray and rectal gel:

- Get medical help right away.

Injection:

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

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

All oral products:

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.

Liquid (concentrate):

- Throw away any part not used after 3 months.

For rectal use:

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Store in the case you were given.

Nose spray:

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Store in the original container to protect from light.
- Do not freeze.

Injection:

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

All products:

- 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.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, 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 conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

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

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