Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Doxepin (Systemic

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

Silenor

Brand Names: Canada

APO-Doxepin; JAMP-Doxepin; MAR-Doxepin; NOVO-Doxepin; Silenor; SINEquan; TARO-Doxepin

Warning

- Drugs like this one have raised the chance of suicidal thoughts or actions in children and young adults. The risk may be greater in people who have had these thoughts or actions in the past. All people who take this drug need to be watched closely. Call the doctor right away if signs like depression, nervousness, restlessness, grouchiness, panic attacks, or changes in mood or actions are new or worse. Call the doctor right away if any thoughts or actions of suicide occur.
- This drug is not approved for use in children. Talk with the doctor.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat depression.
- It is used to treat anxiety.
- It is used to treat sleep problems.

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

For all uses 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: Trouble passing urine or glaucoma.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Linezolid or methylene blue.
- If you have taken certain drugs for depression or Parkinson's disease in the last 14 days. This includes isocarboxazid, phenelzine, tranylcypromine, selegiline, or rasagiline. Very high blood pressure may happen.
- If you are taking any other drugs that can make you sleepy. There are many drugs that can do this. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug.

For sleep problems:

- If you have sleep apnea.

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?

For all uses of this drug:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- 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.
- This drug may raise the chance of seizures in some people, including people who have had seizures in the past. Talk to your doctor to see if you have a greater chance of seizures while taking this drug.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan on getting pregnant. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks of using this drug while you are pregnant.
- Taking this drug in the third trimester of pregnancy may lead to some health problems in the newborn. Talk with the doctor.

For sleep:

- 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.
- Use this drug for short periods of time. If signs show up again, talk with the doctor.
- Some people have done certain tasks or actions while they were not fully awake like driving, making and eating food, and having sex. Most of the time, people do not remember doing these things. Tell your doctor if this happens to you.

For other reasons:

- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this drug affects you.
- It may take several weeks to see the full effects.
- Do not stop taking this drug all of a sudden without calling your doctor. You may have a greater risk of side effects. If you need to stop this drug, you will want to slowly stop it as ordered by your doctor.

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.
- A fast heartbeat.
- Severe dizziness or passing out.
- Seizures.
- Some people may have a higher chance of eye problems with this drug. Your doctor may want you to have an eye exam to see if you have a higher chance of these eye problems. Call your doctor right away if you have eye pain, change in eyesight, or swelling or redness in or around the eye.
- A severe and sometimes deadly problem called serotonin syndrome may happen. The risk may be greater if you also take certain other drugs. Call your doctor right away if you have agitation; change in balance; confusion; hallucinations; fever; fast or abnormal heartbeat; flushing; muscle twitching or stiffness; seizures; shivering or shaking; sweating a lot; severe diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up; or very bad headache.

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:

- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.
- Constipation.
- Upset stomach.
- Dry mouth.
- Signs of a common cold.

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 sleep:

- Take within 30 minutes of bedtime.
- Do not take within 3 hours of a meal.
- 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 you have been taking this drug for many weeks, talk with your doctor before stopping. You may want to slowly stop this drug.

For other reasons:

- Take at bedtime if you are taking once a day.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

Liquid:

- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug.
- Mix the dose with 1/2 cup (4 ounces/120 mL) of water, milk, or certain fruit juices and drink right away. Fruit juices that can be used are orange, grapefruit, tomato, prune, or pineapple juice. Do not mix in other liquids.
- After mixing, take your dose right away. Do not store for future use.

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.

For other reasons:

- 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.

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.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and 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.

Last Reviewed Date

2025-10-20

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

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.

Doxepin (Systemic - Last updated on December 12, 2022
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center