PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Promethazine and Codeine

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.

Warning

For all patients taking this drug:

- This drug has an opioid drug in it. Opioid drugs can put you at risk for addiction, abuse, and misuse. Misuse or abuse of this drug can lead to overdose and death. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.

- This drug has an opioid drug in it. The use of opioid drugs along with a benzodiazepine drug or other drugs that may make you drowsy or slow your actions has led to very bad side effects. Side effects that have happened include slowed or trouble breathing and deaths. Benzodiazepine drugs include drugs like alprazolam, diazepam, and lorazepam. Benzodiazepine drugs are used to treat many health problems like anxiety, trouble sleeping, or seizures. Talk with the doctor.

- Many drugs interact with this drug and can raise the chance of side effects like deadly breathing problems. Talk with your doctor and pharmacist to make sure it is safe to use this drug with all of your drugs.

- Avoid alcohol or other drugs and natural products that slow your actions.

- Get medical help right away if you feel very sleepy, very dizzy, 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.

- Very bad and sometimes deadly breathing problems have happened with this drug. Talk with the doctor.

- Get medical help right away if you have slow breathing, shallow breathing, or trouble breathing.
- Even one dose of this drug may be deadly if it is taken by someone else or by accident, especially in children. If this drug is taken by someone else or by accident, get medical help right away.

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

**Children:**

- This drug is not for use in children younger than 18 years of age. The benefits of taking this drug for a cough due to allergies, a cold, or other infection do not outweigh the risks in children. If your child has been given this drug or if you have any questions, talk with your child’s doctor.

**What is this drug used for?**

- It is used to relieve coughing.
- It is used to ease allergy signs.
- It is used to ease cold signs.

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

- If you have an allergy to codeine, promethazine, or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to any drugs like this one, any other drugs, foods, or other substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had, like rash; hives; itching; shortness of breath; wheezing; cough; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat; or any other signs.
- If you have any of these health problems: Lung or breathing problems like asthma, trouble breathing, or sleep apnea; high levels of carbon dioxide in the blood; or stomach or bowel block or narrowing.
- If you have taken certain drugs used for low mood (depression) like isocarboxazid, phenelzine, or tranylcypromine or drugs used for Parkinson’s disease like selegiline or rasagiline in the last 14 days. Taking this drug within 14 days of those drugs can cause very bad high blood pressure.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Linezolid or methylene blue.
• If you are taking any of these drugs: Buprenorphine, butorphanol, nalbuphine, or pentazocine.
• If you have been told by your doctor that you are a rapid metabolizer of some drugs.
• If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug.

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.
• This drug may be habit-forming with long-term use.
• Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this drug affects you.
• To lower the chance of feeling dizzy or passing out, rise slowly if you have been sitting or lying down. Be careful going up and down stairs.
• 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 have high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your blood sugar closely.
• This drug may cause the results of some pregnancy tests to be wrong. Talk with the doctor.
• This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
• This drug is not for coughs due to smoking or lung disease.
• You may get sunburned more easily. Avoid sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and wear clothing and eyewear that protects you from the sun.

• If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.

• The chance of very bad side effects may be higher in children. This may be more likely to happen in children who have breathing problems. Deadly breathing problems have happened with the use of codeine in some children. Talk with the doctor.

• 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.

• Using this drug for a long time during pregnancy may lead to withdrawal in the newborn baby. This can be life-threatening. Talk with the 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.

• Signs of high or low blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.

• Trouble breathing, slow breathing, or shallow breathing.

• Noisy breathing.

• Feeling very sleepy.

• Feeling confused.

• Fast or slow heartbeat.
• A heartbeat that does not feel normal.
• Very bad constipation.
• Very bad belly pain.
• Trouble passing urine.
• Feeling very tired or weak.
• Yellow skin or eyes.
• Trouble controlling body movements, twitching, change in balance, trouble swallowing or speaking.
• Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
• Mood changes.
• Restlessness.
• Ringing in ears.
• Seizures.
• Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
• Change in eyesight.

• A very bad and sometimes deadly health problem called neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS) may happen. Call your doctor right away if you have any fever, muscle cramps or stiffness, dizziness, very bad headache, confusion, change in thinking, fast heartbeat, heartbeat that does not feel normal, or are sweating a lot.

• Low white blood cell counts have rarely happened with this drug. This may lead to a higher chance of getting an infection. Tell your doctor if you have ever had a low white blood cell count. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat.

**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 sleepy.
• Dizziness.
• Feeling nervous and excitable.
• Constipation.
• Upset stomach or throwing up.
• Dry mouth.
• Headache.
• Flushing.
• Sweating a lot.
• Feeling tired or weak.

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.

How is this drug best taken?

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

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

What do I do if I miss a dose?

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

- Store at room temperature.
- Protect 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.
- Keep a list of all your drugs (prescription, natural products, vitamins, OTC) with you. Give this list to your doctor.
- Talk with the doctor before starting any new drug, including prescription or OTC, natural products, or vitamins.
- 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.
- 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.

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This information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief
summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, 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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