

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Haloperidol

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: US

Haldol Decanoate; Haldol [DSC]

Brand Names: Canada

APO-Haloperidol [DSC]; TEVA-Haloperidol

Warning

- There is a higher chance of death in older adults who take this drug for mental problems caused by dementia. Most of the deaths were linked to heart disease or infection. This drug is not approved to treat mental problems caused by dementia.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat problems with how one acts.
- It is used to treat schizophrenia.
- It is used to treat Tourette's syndrome.
- It is used to treat mood problems.
- It may be given to your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child is feeling very tired or sleepy.

If your child is breast-feeding a baby:

- Be sure your child does not breast-feed a baby while taking this drug.

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

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

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have your child avoid tasks or actions that call for alertness until you see how this drug affects your child. These are things like riding a bike, playing sports, or using items such as scissors, lawnmowers, electric scooters, toy cars, or motorized vehicles.
- Have your child's blood work checked often. Talk with your child's doctor.
- If your child has high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your child's blood sugar closely.
- Alcohol may interact with this drug. Be sure your child does not drink

alcohol.

- Talk with your child's doctor before your child uses marijuana, other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC drugs that may slow your child's actions.
- If your child has been taking this drug on a regular basis and stops taking it all of a sudden, your child may have signs of withdrawal. Do not stop giving this drug all of a sudden without calling the doctor. Tell the doctor if your child has any bad effects.
- Sudden death and heartbeats that are not normal have happened with this drug. Very high doses raise the chance of these problems. Tell your doctor if you have a heartbeat that is not normal like long QT on ECG, electrolyte problems like low potassium or magnesium levels, heart problems, low thyroid function, or a family member that has a long QT on ECG. Tell your doctor if you take any drugs that may raise the chance of a heartbeat that is not normal. Ask your doctor if you are not sure. Talk with your doctor.
- Heat stroke has happened in people taking this drug. Be careful in hot weather and during physical activity.
- Have your child drink lots of noncaffeine liquids unless told to drink less liquid by your child's doctor.
- If your child also takes lithium, talk with your child's doctor. A few people who were taking this drug along with lithium have had very bad side effects and brain problems that did not go away.
- Dizziness, sleepiness, and feeling less stable may happen with this drug. These may lead to falling, which can cause broken bones or other health problems.

If your child is pregnant:

- Tell the doctor if your child is pregnant or becomes pregnant. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks of your child using this drug while pregnant.

- Taking this drug in the third trimester of pregnancy may lead to side effects or withdrawal in the newborn.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child's 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 child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has 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.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of low sodium levels like headache, trouble focusing, memory problems, feeling confused, weakness, seizures, or change in balance.
- Trouble controlling body movements, twitching, change in balance, trouble swallowing or speaking.
- Shakiness, trouble moving around, or stiffness.
- Fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- Chest pain that is new or worse.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Trouble passing urine.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Change in eyesight.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).

- Seizures.
- Mental, mood, or behavior changes that are new or worse.
- Not able to control eye movements.
- Enlarged breasts or nipple discharge.
- Painful erection (hard penis) or an erection that lasts for longer than 4 hours.
- Tell your child's doctor if your child has signs of high or low blood sugar like breath that smells like fruit, dizziness, fast breathing, fast heartbeat, feeling confused, feeling sleepy, feeling weak, flushing, headache, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, shaking, or sweating.
- A very bad and sometimes deadly health problem called neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS) may happen. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has any fever, muscle cramps or stiffness, dizziness, very bad headache, confusion, change in thinking, fast heartbeat, heartbeat that does not feel normal, or is sweating a lot.
- Some people may get a severe muscle problem called tardive dyskinesia. This problem may lessen or go away after stopping this drug, but it may not go away. The risk is greater with diabetes and in older adults, especially older females. The risk is greater with longer use or higher doses, but it may also occur after short-term use with low doses. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has trouble controlling body movements or problems with the tongue, face, mouth, or jaw like tongue sticking out, puffing cheeks, mouth puckering, or chewing.
- Low white blood cell counts have happened with drugs like this one. This may lead to a higher chance of infection. Rarely, infections have been deadly. Tell the doctor if your child has ever had a low white blood cell count. Call the doctor right away if your child has signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat.
- Some people have gotten pneumonia when taking this drug. Sometimes, this has been deadly. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has fever, chest pain, cough, shortness of breath, or wheezing.

If your child has menstrual periods:

- No menstrual period.

If your child is or may be sexually active:

- Not able to get or keep an erection.
- Change in sex interest.

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 child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Feeling sleepy.
- Anxiety.
- Dry mouth.
- More saliva.
- Constipation, diarrhea, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Headache.
- Restlessness.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Pimples (acne).

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

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All oral products:

- Give this drug with or without food. Give with food if it causes an upset stomach.
- Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well.

Oral solution:

- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug.
- You may give this drug without mixing, or you may mix this drug with food or drink as you have been told.

Short-acting injection:

- It is given as a shot into a muscle.
- It may be given as a shot into a vein.

Long-acting injection:

- It is given as a shot into a muscle.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

All oral products:

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

All injection products:

- Call your child's 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.

Oral solution:

- Do not freeze.

All injection products:

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

All products:

- 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 child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's 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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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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