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PSYCHIATRY

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PATIENT EDUCATION

Haloperidol

Haldol / Generic oral and injectable formulations

A guide for adults taking haloperidol.
Follow the directions on your prescription and your provider's recommendations.

ORAL AND INJECTION SCHEDULES DIFFER

DECANOATE IS A LONG-ACTING INJECTION

Formulations: Oral tablets or concentrate, short-acting injections, and long-acting decanoate injections have different uses and schedules. Any initial oral overlap with a depot is individualized.

What it is used for

Haloperidol treats psychotic disorders and is used in selected situations for severe agitation or tics. The reason for use determines whether treatment is short-term or ongoing.

How it works

It blocks dopamine D2 receptors. This can reduce psychotic symptoms, but can also affect movement and prolactin, a hormone involved in breast and reproductive function.

What to expect over time

Some symptoms improve earlier than others. Changes in hallucinations, mood, or organized thinking often develop over several weeks. Track practical goals, such as regular sleep and daily activities, and report side effects or limited benefit.

Taking your medication

- Take oral doses at the prescribed times. Measure concentrate accurately.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose. Then skip it. Do not double a dose.
- Keep injection appointments and call the clinic if one is missed.
- Do not change oral doses after an injection without instructions.

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Side effects and safety

Possible side effects

- Stiffness, tremor, restlessness, or slowed movement
- Drowsiness or dizziness
- Breast discharge, menstrual changes, or sexual effects

Keeping track of treatment

Some side effects resolve with time; others may require a change of medication. Discuss persistent or bothersome side effects with your provider.

Expect periodic checks of weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and movement symptoms. Some changes, such as higher blood sugar, may occur before you feel different.

Report new mouth, tongue, face, or limb movements. Tardive dyskinesia is a movement disorder that can persist after medication is stopped.

If you take too much

For a suspected overdose, call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222** immediately, even if you feel well. Call 911 for a seizure, collapse, trouble breathing, or inability to wake.

Before you start

Discuss diabetes, heart-rhythm problems, fainting, seizures, low blood counts, swallowing difficulties, and kidney or liver disease. Antipsychotics increase the risk of death in older adults with dementia-related psychosis.

Discuss pregnancy, pregnancy plans, and breastfeeding with your provider. Treatment decisions should consider both the medication and the condition being treated.

Parkinson disease and dementia with Lewy bodies are important contraindication concerns. Discuss QT prolongation and low potassium or magnesium.

Medicines and interactions

Review all your medications with your provider, including over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Have new medications checked before taking them.

Other QT-prolonging medicines can increase heart-rhythm risk. Dopamine medicines such as levodopa may conflict.

CYP2D6 or CYP3A inhibitors can raise levels; enzyme-inducing medicines can lower them. Alcohol and other sedatives add impairment.

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Living with your treatment

When to get help

Emergency symptoms. Get emergency care for fever with severe muscle stiffness and confusion, a seizure, fainting with an irregular heartbeat, or trouble breathing. Fever and stiffness can signal neuroleptic malignant syndrome, a rare but serious reaction.

Prompt medical advice. Seek same-day care for sudden neck, jaw, or eye spasms. Call 911 if breathing or swallowing is affected. Report severe restlessness or new involuntary movements.

If you feel unsafe or have thoughts of self-harm, call 911 or go to an emergency department.

Your questions answered

Can I stop when I feel better?
Consult with your provider. Continuing treatment may prevent symptoms from returning. Abrupt stopping can cause withdrawal symptoms or a relapse.

What if I cannot sit still?
An inner urge to keep moving can be akathisia, a medication side effect. Tell your provider promptly; it can be mistaken for worsening anxiety.

Everyday tips

Stand up slowly. Avoid driving until you know how the medication affects alertness and coordination.

Stay hydrated and take breaks in hot weather. Some antipsychotics interfere with temperature regulation.

Discuss appetite or weight changes early, and keep scheduled monitoring visits.

Storage and safety

Keep medication in its labeled container, away from excess heat and moisture and out of reach of children and pets. Do not share it. Ask a pharmacy about disposal of unused medication.

Sources

MedlinePlus: Haloperidol

Educational handout; does not replace your prescription or provider's recommendations.