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2. Dilaudid

Dilaudid

Generic name: [hydromorphone](#) (oral) [HYE-droe-MOR-fone]

Brand names: Dilaudid, [Exalgo](#), Hydrostat IR

Drug class: [Opioids \(narcotic analgesics\)](#)

Medically reviewed by [Philip Thornton, DipPharm](#). Last updated on Apr 23, 2024.

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What is Dilaudid?

Dilaudid is an opioid pain medication. An opioid is sometimes called a narcotic.

Dilaudid is used to treat moderate to severe pain.

Dilaudid may also be used for purposes not listed in this medication guide.

Warnings

You should not take Dilaudid if you have severe breathing problems, or a blockage in your stomach or intestines.

Dilaudid can slow or stop your breathing, especially when you start using this medicine or whenever your dose is changed. **Never use Dilaudid in larger amounts, or for longer than prescribed.** Do not crush, break, or open an extended-release pill. Swallow it whole to avoid exposure to a potentially fatal dose.

Dilaudid may be habit-forming, even at regular doses. **Take this medicine exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Never share the medicine with another person. MISUSE OF NARCOTIC PAIN MEDICATION CAN CAUSE ADDICTION, OVERDOSE, OR DEATH, especially in a child or other person using the medicine without a prescription.**

Tell your doctor if you are pregnant. **Dilaudid may cause life-threatening addiction and withdrawal symptoms in a newborn if the mother has taken this medicine during pregnancy.**

Do not drink alcohol. Dangerous side effects or death could occur when alcohol is combined with hydromorphone.

Before using Dilaudid

You should not take Dilaudid if you have ever had an allergic reaction to hydromorphone or other narcotic medicines, or if you have:

- breathing problems, sleep apnea;

- a blockage in your stomach or intestines; or
- a bowel obstruction called paralytic ileus.

Do not use Dilaudid if you have used a MAO inhibitor in the past 14 days. A dangerous drug interaction could occur. MAO inhibitors include isocarboxazid, linezolid, methylene blue injection, phenelzine, rasagiline, selegiline, tranylcypromine, and others.

Some medicines can interact with hydromorphone and cause a serious condition called [serotonin syndrome](#). Be sure your doctor knows if you also take medicine for depression, mental illness, Parkinson's disease, migraine headaches, serious infections, or prevention of nausea and vomiting. Ask your doctor before making any changes in how or when you take your medications.

You may not be able to take Dilaudid if you are NOT already being treated with a similar opioid (narcotic) pain medicine and are tolerant to it. Talk with your doctor if you are not sure you are opioid-tolerant.

Dilaudid may be habit-forming. Never share this medicine with another person, especially someone with a history of drug abuse or addiction. Keep the medication in a place where others cannot get to it. **Selling or giving away hydromorphone to any other person is against the law.**

To make sure hydromorphone is safe for you, tell your doctor if you have:

- noisy breathing, sighing, shallow breathing, breathing that stops during sleep;
- a history of head injury, brain tumor, or seizures;
- a history of drug abuse, alcohol addiction, or mental illness;
- urination problems;
- liver or kidney disease;
- sulfite allergy;
- Addison's disease or other adrenal gland disorders;
- problems with your gallbladder, pancreas, or thyroid; or
- **if you use a sedative like Valium** - diazepam, alprazolam, lorazepam, Xanax, Klonopin, Versed, and others;

It is not known whether this medicine will harm an unborn baby. If you use hydromorphone while you are pregnant, your baby could become dependent on the drug. This can cause life-threatening withdrawal symptoms in the baby after it is born. Babies born dependent on habit-forming medicine may need medical treatment for several weeks. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.

Hydromorphone can pass into breast milk and may harm a nursing baby. You should not breast-feed while you are using Dilaudid.

 [Dilaudid pregnancy and breastfeeding warnings](#) (more detail)

How should I use Dilaudid?

Take Dilaudid exactly as prescribed. Follow all directions on your prescription label. Dilaudid can slow or stop your breathing, especially when you start using this medicine or whenever your dose is changed. Never use Dilaudid in larger amounts, or for longer than prescribed. Tell your doctor if the medicine seems to stop working as well in relieving your

pain.

Dilaudid may be habit-forming, even at regular doses. Take this medicine exactly as prescribed by your doctor. **MISUSE OF NARCOTIC PAIN MEDICATION CAN CAUSE ADDICTION, OVERDOSE, OR DEATH.**

Measure the liquid medicine with a special dose-measuring spoon or medicine cup, not with a regular table spoon. If you do not have a dose-measuring device, ask your pharmacist for one.

Do not stop using Dilaudid suddenly, or you could have unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. Ask your doctor how to safely stop using this medicine.

Never crush or break a tablet to inhale the powder or mix it into a liquid to inject the drug into your vein. This practice has resulted in death with the misuse of hydromorphone and similar prescription drugs.

Store at room temperature away from moisture, heat, and light. Throw away any unused liquid after 90 days.

Keep track of the amount of medicine used from each new bottle. Hydromorphone is a drug of abuse and you should be aware if anyone is using your medicine improperly or without a prescription.

Do not keep leftover Dilaudid tablets or liquid. Ask your pharmacist where to locate a drug take-back disposal program. If there is no take-back program, flush any unused tablets or liquid down the toilet. Disposal of medicines by flushing is recommended to reduce the danger of accidental overdose causing death. This advice applies to a very small number of medicines only. The FDA, working with the manufacturer, has determined this method to be the most appropriate route of disposal and presents the least risk to human safety.

 [Detailed Dilaudid dosage information](#)

What happens if I miss a dose?

Since Dilaudid is used for pain, you are not likely to miss a dose. Skip any missed dose if it is almost time for your next scheduled dose. Do not use extra medicine to make up the missed dose.

What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention or call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222. **A hydromorphone overdose can be fatal, especially in a child or other person using the medicine without a prescription.** Overdose symptoms may include slow breathing and heart rate, severe drowsiness, muscle weakness, cold and clammy skin, pinpoint pupils, and fainting.

What should I avoid?

Do not drink alcohol. Dangerous side effects or death can occur when alcohol is combined with hydromorphone.

This medication may impair your thinking or reactions. Avoid driving or operating machinery until you know how Dilaudid will affect you. Dizziness or severe drowsiness can cause falls or other accidents.

Dilaudid side effects

Get emergency medical help if you have any **signs of an allergic reaction to Dilaudid:** hives; difficulty breathing;

swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Like other narcotic medicines, hydromorphone can slow your breathing. Death may occur if breathing becomes too weak.

Call your doctor at once if you have:

- noisy breathing, sighing, shallow breathing, breathing that stops during sleep;
- confusion, feelings of extreme happiness or sadness;
- severe weakness or drowsiness;
- a light-headed feeling, like you might pass out;
- infertility, missed menstrual periods;
- impotence, sexual problems, loss of interest in sex; or
- low cortisol levels - nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, dizziness, worsening tiredness or weakness.

Seek medical attention right away if you have symptoms of serotonin syndrome, such as: agitation, hallucinations, fever, sweating, shivering, fast heart rate, muscle stiffness, twitching, loss of coordination, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Hydromorphone is more likely to cause breathing problems in older adults and people who are severely ill, malnourished, or otherwise debilitated.

Common Dilaudid side effects may include:

- constipation, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain;
- dizziness, drowsiness;
- headache, tired feeling;
- feelings of extreme happiness or sadness;
- sweating, mild itching;
- dry mouth; or
- flushing (warmth, redness, or tingly feeling).

This is not a complete list of side effects and others may occur. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

 [Dilaudid side effects](#) (more detail)

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What other drugs will affect Dilaudid?

Hydromorphone can interact with many other drugs and cause dangerous side effects or death. Be sure your doctor knows if you also use:

- **other narcotic medications** - opioid pain medicine or prescription cough medicine;
- **a sedative like Valium** - diazepam, alprazolam, lorazepam, Xanax, Klonopin, Versed, and others;
- **drugs that make you sleepy or slow your breathing** - a sleeping pill, muscle relaxer, medicine to treat mood disorders or mental illness; or
- **drugs that affect serotonin levels in your body** - a stimulant, or medicine for depression, Parkinson's disease, migraine headaches, serious infections, or nausea and vomiting.

This list is not complete. Other drugs may affect hydromorphone, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products. **Not all possible interactions are listed here.**

 [Dilaudid drug interactions](#) (more detail)

Does Dilaudid interact with my other drugs?

Enter medications to view a detailed interaction report using our [Drug Interaction Checker](#).

Dilaudid

+

Enter a drug name

Add

Frequently asked questions

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References

1. [Dilaudid Product Label](#)

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Other brands

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Professional resources

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Other brands

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Related treatment guides

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Further information

Remember, keep this and all other medicines out of the reach of children, never share your medicines with others, and use Dilaudid only for the indication prescribed.

Always consult your healthcare provider to ensure the information displayed on this page applies to your personal circumstances.

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DRUG STATUS

Availability	
Rx	Prescription only
Pregnancy & Lactation	
	Risk data available
CSA Schedule*	
2	High potential for abuse
Approval History	
	Drug history at FDA
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