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2. Hydrocodone

Hydrocodone

Generic name: hydrocodone (oral) [*HYE-droe-KOE-done*]

Brand names: [Hysingla ER](#), [Zohydro ER](#)

Drug classes: [Antitussives](#), [Opioids \(narcotic analgesics\)](#)

Medically reviewed by [Philip Thornton, DipPharm](#). Last updated on Sep 25, 2023.

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What is hydrocodone?

[Hydrocodone](#) is an opioid pain medication.

Zohydro ER and Hysingla ER are extended-release forms of hydrocodone that are used for around-the-clock treatment of [severe pain](#).

Extended-release hydrocodone is not for use on an as-needed basis for pain.

Warnings

Hydrocodone can slow or stop your breathing. Never use this medicine 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.

Hydrocodone may be habit-forming, even at regular doses. 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.

MISUSE OF OPIOID MEDICINE CAN CAUSE ADDICTION, OVERDOSE, OR DEATH. Keep the medication in a place where others cannot get to it.

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

Fatal side effects can occur if you use opioid medicine with alcohol, or with other drugs that cause drowsiness or slow your breathing.

Before taking this medicine

You should not use hydrocodone if you are allergic to it, or if you have:

- severe [asthma](#) or breathing problems; or

- a blockage in your stomach or intestines.

To make sure hydrocodone is safe for you, tell your doctor if you have ever had:

- breathing problems, sleep apnea;
- a [head injury](#), [brain tumor](#), or [seizures](#);
- drug or alcohol addiction, or mental illness;
- urination problems;
- liver or kidney disease;
- problems with your gallbladder, pancreas, or thyroid; or
- a heart rhythm disorder called [long QT syndrome](#).

If you use opioid medicine 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 [opioids](#) may need medical treatment for several weeks.

Ask a doctor before using hydrocodone if you are breastfeeding. Tell your doctor if you notice severe drowsiness or slow breathing in the nursing baby.

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

How should I take hydrocodone?

Hydrocodone may be habit-forming, even at regular doses. Follow the directions on your prescription label and read all medication guides. Never use hydrocodone in larger amounts, or for longer than prescribed. Tell your doctor if you feel an increased urge to take more of this medicine.

Never share opioid medicine with another person, especially someone with a history of drug abuse or addiction. MISUSE CAN CAUSE ADDICTION, OVERDOSE, OR DEATH. Keep the medication in a place where others cannot get to it. Selling or giving away opioid medicine is against the law.

Your dose needs may be different if you have recently used a similar opioid pain medicine and your body is tolerant to it. Talk with your doctor if you are not sure you are opioid-tolerant.

Do not crush, break, or open an **extended-release pill**. Swallow it whole to avoid exposure to a potentially fatal dose.

Never crush or break a hydrocodone pill to inhale the powder or mix it into a liquid to inject the drug into your vein. This can cause death.

Do not stop using this medicine suddenly after long-term use, or you could have serious withdrawal symptoms. Ask your doctor how to safely stop using hydrocodone.

Store at room temperature, away from heat, moisture, and light. Keep track of your medicine. You should be aware if anyone is using it improperly or without a prescription.

Do not keep leftover opioid medication. **Just one dose can cause death in someone using this medicine accidentally or improperly.** Ask your pharmacist where to locate a drug take-back disposal program. If there is no take-back program, flush the unused medicine down the toilet.

 [Hydrocodone patient tips](#) (more detail)

Dosing information

Usual Adult Dose for Chronic Pain:

The following dosing recommendations can only be considered suggested approaches to what is actually a series of clinical decisions over time; each patient should be managed individually.

As First Opioid Analgesic and For Patients who are NOT Opioid Tolerant:

Extended-Release Capsules (Zohydro(R) ER): Initial dose: 10 mg orally every 12 hours

Extended-Release Tablets (Hysingla(R) ER): Initial dose: 20 mg orally every 24 hours

Comments:

-Use of higher starting doses in patients who are not opioid tolerant may cause fatal respiratory depression; monitor patients closely for respiratory depression, especially during the first 24 to 72 hours.

-An opioid tolerant patient is one who has been receiving for 1-week or longer at least: oral morphine 60 mg/day, fentanyl transdermal patch 25 mcg per hour, oral oxycodone 30 mg/day, oral hydromorphone 8 mg/day, oral oxymorphone 25 mg/day, or an equianalgesic dose of another opioid.

 [Detailed Hydrocodone dosage information](#)

What happens if I miss a dose?

Since hydrocodone is used for pain, you are not likely to miss a dose. Skip any missed dose if it is almost time for your next dose. Do not use two doses at one time.

What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention or call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222. **A hydrocodone overdose can be fatal, especially in a child or other person using the medicine without a prescription.** Overdose symptoms may include severe drowsiness, pinpoint pupils, slow breathing, or no breathing.

Your doctor may recommend you get naloxone (a medicine to reverse an opioid overdose) and keep it with you at all times. A person caring for you can give the naloxone if you stop breathing or don't wake up. Your caregiver must still get emergency medical help and may need to perform CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) on you while waiting for help to arrive.

Anyone can buy naloxone from a pharmacy or local health department. Make sure any person caring for you knows where you keep naloxone and how to use it.

What to avoid

Do not drink alcohol. Dangerous side effects or death could occur.

Avoid driving or hazardous activity until you know how hydrocodone will affect you. [Dizziness](#) or drowsiness can cause falls, accidents, or severe injuries.

Hydrocodone side effects

Get emergency medical help if you have **signs of an allergic reaction to hydrocodone**: [hives](#); difficult breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Opioid medicine can slow or stop your breathing, and death may occur. A person caring for you should give naloxone and/or seek emergency medical attention if you have slow breathing with long pauses, blue colored lips, or if you are hard to wake up.

Stop using hydrocodone and call your doctor at once if you have:

- noisy breathing, sighing, shallow breathing, breathing that stops during sleep;
- a slow heart rate or weak pulse;
- pain or burning when you urinate;
- confusion, tremors, severe drowsiness;
- a light-headed feeling, like you might pass out;
- **low cortisol levels** - nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, dizziness, worsening tiredness or weakness; or
- **high levels of serotonin in the body** - agitation, hallucinations, fever, sweating, shivering, fast heart rate, muscle stiffness, twitching, loss of coordination, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea.

Serious breathing problems may be more likely in older adults and in those who are debilitated or have wasting syndrome or chronic breathing disorders.

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](#).

Long-term use of opioid medication may affect fertility (ability to have children) in men or women. It is not known whether opioid effects on fertility are permanent.

Common hydrocodone side effects may include:

- [constipation](#), nausea, vomiting;
- dizziness, drowsiness, feeling tired;
- [headache](#); or
- [cold symptoms](#) such as stuffy nose, sneezing, [sore throat](#).

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.

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

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What other drugs will affect hydrocodone?

You may have breathing problems or withdrawal symptoms if you start or stop taking certain other medicines. Tell your doctor if you also use an [antibiotic](#), antifungal medication, heart or blood pressure medication, seizure medication, or medicine to treat [HIV](#) or [hepatitis C](#).

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

- cold or allergy medicines, bronchodilator asthma/COPD medication, or a diuretic ("water pill");
- medicines for motion sickness, irritable bowel syndrome, or overactive bladder;
- **other opioids** - 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 interact with hydrocodone, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, [vitamins](#), and [herbal products](#). Not all possible interactions are listed here.

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

Does hydrocodone interact with my other drugs?

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

hydrocodone

+

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Patient resources

- [Hydrocodone Extended-Release Capsules patient information](#)

Other brands

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Professional resources

- [HYDROcodone \(Analgesic\) monograph](#)
- [HYDROcodone Bitartrate \(Antitussive\) \(AHFS Monograph\)](#)
- [Hydrocodone ER Capsules \(FDA\)](#)

- [Hydrocodone ER Tablets \(FDA\)](#)

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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 hydrocodone 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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