



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Desipramine hydrochloride overdose

URL of this page: //medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002626.htm

Desipramine hydrochloride overdose

Desipramine hydrochloride is a type of medicine called a tricyclic antidepressant. It is most often taken to relieve symptoms of depression but has other common uses such as to treat long-term pain. Desipramine hydrochloride overdose occurs when someone takes more than the normal or recommended amount of this medicine. This can be by accident or on purpose.

This article is for information only. DO NOT use it to treat or manage an actual overdose. If you or someone you are with has an overdose, call your local emergency number (such as 911), or your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States.

Poisonous Ingredient

Desipramine

Where Found

Desipramine hydrochloride is found in the medicine called Norpramin.

Symptoms

Below are symptoms of a desipramine hydrochloride overdose in different parts of the body. These symptoms may occur more often or be more severe in people who also take certain other medicines that affect serotonin, a chemical in the brain.

AIRWAYS AND LUNGS

- Breathing slowed and labored

BLADDER AND KIDNEYS

- Urine does not flow easily
- Cannot urinate

EYES, EARS, NOSE, MOUTH, AND THROAT

- Blurred vision
- Dilated (wide) pupils

- Dry mouth
- Eye pain in people at risk for a type of glaucoma

STOMACH AND INTESTINES

- Vomiting
- Constipation

HEART AND BLOOD

- Irregular heartbeat
- Low blood pressure
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shock

NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Agitation, restlessness, confusion, hallucinations
- Seizures
- Drowsiness
- Stupor (lack of alertness), coma
- Uncoordinated movement
- Rigidity or stiffness of the limbs

Home Care

This can be a very serious overdose. Get medical help right away. Do not make the person throw up unless poison control or a health care provider tells you to.

Before Calling Emergency

Have this information ready:

- Person's age, weight, and condition
- Name of product (ingredients and strength, if known)
- Time it was swallowed
- Amount swallowed
- If the medicine was prescribed for the person

Poison Control

Your local poison control center can be reached directly by calling the national toll-free Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222) from anywhere in the United States. This national hotline will let you talk to experts in poisoning. They will give you further instructions.

This is a free and confidential service. All local poison control centers in the United States use this national number. You should call if you have any questions about poisoning or poison prevention. It does NOT need to be an emergency. You can call for any reason, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What to Expect at the Emergency Room

Take the container to the hospital with you, if possible.

The provider will measure and monitor the person's vital signs, including temperature, pulse, breathing rate, and blood pressure.

Tests that may be done include:

- Blood and urine tests
- Chest x-ray
- CT scan
- Electrocardiogram (ECG)

Treatment may include:

- Fluids through a vein (by IV)
- Medicine called an antidote to reverse the effects of the poison and treat symptoms, such as sodium bicarbonate or lidocaine
- Laxatives
- Activated charcoal
- Breathing support, including a tube through the mouth and breathing machine (ventilator)

Outlook (Prognosis)

An overdose of desipramine hydrochloride can be very serious.

People who swallow too much of this medicine are almost always admitted to the hospital.

How well someone does depends on how much of the medicine was swallowed and how quickly treatment is given. The faster a person gets medical help, the better the chance of recovery. Complications such as heart rhythm disturbances, pneumonia, muscle damage from lying on a hard surface for a long period of time, or brain damage from lack of oxygen may result in permanent disability. Death can occur.

References

Aronson JK. Tricyclic antidepressants. In: Aronson JK, ed. *Meyler's Side Effects of Drugs*. 16th ed. Waltham, MA: Elsevier; 2016:146-169.

Levine MD, Ruha AM. Antidepressants. In: Walls RM, ed. *Rosen's Emergency Medicine: Concepts and Clinical Practice*. 10th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2023:chap 141.

Review Date 11/2/2023

Updated by: Jesse Borke, MD, CPE, FAAEM, FACEP, Attending Physician at Kaiser Permanente, Orange County, CA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

Learn how to cite this page



Health Content
Provider
06/01/2028

A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, for Health Content Provider (www.urac.org). URAC's [accreditation program](#) is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#), and [privacy policy](#).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed medical professional should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Links to other sites are provided for information only – they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, or correctness of any translations made by a third-party service of the information provided herein into any other language. © 1997-2025 A.D.A.M., a business unit of Ebix, Inc. Any duplication or distribution of the information contained herein is strictly prohibited.



National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

National Institutes of Health