

DrugFAQs

Dilaudid

*Generic name: Hydromorphone
hydrochloride*

Brand names: Dilaudid

Why is Dilaudid prescribed?

Dilaudid, a narcotic analgesic, is prescribed for the relief of moderate to severe pain such as that due to:

Biliary colic (pain caused by an obstruction in the gallbladder or bile duct)

Burns

Cancer

Heart attack

Injury (soft tissue and bone)

Renal colic (sharp lower back and groin pain usually caused by the passage of a stone through the ureter)

Surgery

Most important fact about Dilaudid

High dose tolerance leading to mental and physical dependence can occur with the use of Dilaudid when it is taken repeatedly. Physical dependence (need for continual doses to prevent withdrawal symptoms) can occur after only a few days of narcotic use, although it usually takes several weeks.

How should you take Dilaudid?

Take Dilaudid exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Never increase the amount you take without your doctor's approval.

--*If you miss a dose...* Take the forgotten dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the one you missed and go back to your regular schedule. Never try to "catch up" by doubling the dose.

--*Storage instructions...* Tablets and liquid should be stored at room temperature. Protect from light and extreme cold or heat. Suppositories should be stored in the refrigerator.

What side effects may occur?

Side effects cannot be anticipated. If any develop or change in intensity, inform your doctor as soon as possible. Only your doctor can determine if it is safe for you to continue taking Dilaudid.

- *More common side effects may include:*
Anxiety, constipation, dizziness, drowsiness, fear, impairment of mental and physical performance, inability to urinate, mental clouding, mood changes, nausea, restlessness, sedation, sluggishness, troubled and slowed breathing, vomiting

Why should Dilaudid not be prescribed?

If you are sensitive to or have ever had an allergic reaction to Dilaudid or narcotic painkillers, you should not take Dilaudid. Make sure that your doctor is aware of any drug reactions that you have experienced. Additionally, you should not take Dilaudid if you suffer from severe, uncontrolled breathing difficulties or uncontrolled asthma. Dilaudid cannot be used in pregnant women during labor or delivery.

Special warnings about Dilaudid

Do not stop taking Dilaudid without your doctor's approval. Abruptly stopping Dilaudid could cause withdrawal symptoms within the first 24 hours, including restlessness, tearing or watery eyes, dilated pupils, runny nose, yawning, sweating, goosebumps, and restless sleep. These symptoms could increase during the next 72 hours, and new withdrawal symptoms may appear, including irritability, anxiety, weakness, muscle spasms, severe backache, stomach or leg pain, insomnia, vomiting, and diarrhea. Dilaudid may impair the mental and/or physical abilities required for the performance of potentially hazardous tasks such as driving a car or operating machinery. Dilaudid should be used with caution if you are in a weakened condition or if you have a severe liver or kidney disorder, hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid gland), Addison's disease (adrenal gland failure), severe lung problems, an enlarged prostate, a urethral stricture (narrowing of the urethra), low blood pressure, or a head injury. It's important to tell the doctor if you've ever suffered from alcoholism or other drug dependencies. Abusing Dilaudid, or combining it with other nervous system depressants, can cause serious--and possibly life-threatening--side effects.

Dilaudid suppresses the cough reflex; therefore, the doctor will be cautious about prescribing Dilaudid after an operation or for patients with a [lung](#) disease. High doses of Dilaudid may produce labored or slowed breathing. This drug also affects centers that control breathing rhythm and may produce irregular breathing. People who already have breathing difficulties should be very careful about taking Dilaudid. Be especially cautious if you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or a condition that reduces oxygen to the tissues (hypoxia) or causes an excess of carbon dioxide in the blood (hypercapnia). Let the doctor know if you're scheduled to have any surgical procedures involving the biliary tract, since Dilaudid could increase the chance of muscle spasms in this area. Narcotics such as Dilaudid may mask or hide the symptoms of sudden or severe abdominal conditions, making diagnosis and treatment difficult. Dilaudid can cause seizures when taken in high doses and, if you have a seizure disorder, can make the seizures worse. Be sure to tell the doctor if you're sensitive to sulfites (preservatives commonly found in red wine), since Dilaudid contains this substance.

Possible food and drug interactions when taking Dilaudid

Dilaudid is a central nervous system depressant and intensifies the effects of alcohol. Do not drink alcohol while taking Dilaudid. If Dilaudid is taken with certain other drugs, the effects of either could be increased, decreased, or altered. It is especially important to check with your doctor before combining Dilaudid with the following:

Antiemetics (drugs that prevent or lessen nausea and vomiting such as Compazine and Phenergan)

Antihistamines such as Benadryl

General anesthetics

Opioid antagonists such as naloxone (Narcan) and nalmefene (Revex)

Other central nervous system depressants such as Nembutal, Restoril

Other narcotic analgesics such as Demerol and Percocet

Phenothiazines such as Thorazine

Sedative/hypnotics such as Valium, Halcion

Tranquilizers such as Xanax

Tricyclic antidepressants such as Elavil and Tofranil

Special information if you are pregnant or breastfeeding

Do not take Dilaudid if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant unless you are directed to do so by your doctor. Drug dependence occurs in newborns when the mother has taken narcotic drugs regularly during pregnancy. Withdrawal signs include irritability and excessive crying, tremors, overactive reflexes, increased breathing rate, increased stools, sneezing, yawning, vomiting, and fever. Dilaudid may appear in breast milk and could affect a nursing infant. If Dilaudid is essential to your health, your doctor may advise you to discontinue breastfeeding your baby until your treatment is finished.

Recommended dosage

ADULTS

Tablets

The usual starting dose of Dilaudid tablets is 2 to 4 milligrams every 4 to 6 hours as determined by your doctor. Severity of pain, your individual response, and your size are used to determine your exact dosage.

Liquid

The usual dose of Dilaudid liquid is one-half to 2 teaspoonfuls every 3 to 6 hours. In some cases, the dosage may be higher.

Suppositories

Dilaudid suppositories (3 milligrams) may provide relief for a longer period of time. The usual adult dose is 1 suppository inserted rectally every 6 to 8 hours or as directed by your doctor.

CHILDREN

The safety and effectiveness of Dilaudid have not been established in children.

OLDER ADULTS

Be very careful when using Dilaudid. Your doctor will prescribe a dose individualized to suit your needs.

Overdosage

- *Symptoms of Dilaudid overdose include:*
Bluish tinge to skin, cold and clammy skin, constricted pupils, coma, extreme sleepiness progressing to a state of unresponsiveness, labored

or slowed breathing, limp, weak muscles, low blood pressure, slow heart rate

In severe overdosage, the patient may stop breathing. Shock, heart attack, and death can occur. If you suspect an overdose, seek emergency medical treatment immediately.