

DrugFAQs

Valium

Generic name: Diazepam

Brand names: Valium

Why is Valium prescribed?

Valium is used in the treatment of anxiety disorders and for short-term relief of the symptoms of anxiety. It belongs to a class of drugs known as benzodiazepines. It is also used to relieve the symptoms of acute alcohol withdrawal, to relax muscles, to relieve the uncontrolled muscle movements caused by cerebral palsy and paralysis of the lower body and limbs, to control involuntary movement of the hands (athetosis), to relax tight, aching muscles, and, along with other medications, to treat convulsive disorders such as epilepsy.

Most important fact about Valium

Valium can be habit-forming or addictive. You may experience withdrawal symptoms if you stop using Valium abruptly. Discontinue or change your dose only on your doctor's advice.

How should you take Valium?

Take Valium exactly as prescribed. If you are taking Valium for epilepsy, make sure you take it every day at the same time.

--*If you miss a dose...* Take it as soon as you remember if it is within an hour or so of the scheduled time. If you do not remember until later, skip the dose you missed and go back to your regular schedule. Never take 2 doses at the same time.

--*Storage instructions...* Store away from heat, light, and moisture.

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 Valium.

- *More common side effects may include:*
Anxiety, drowsiness, fatigue, light-headedness, loss of muscle coordination
- *Side effects due to a rapid decrease in dose or abrupt withdrawal from Valium:*
Abdominal and muscle cramps, convulsions, sweating, tremors, vomiting

Why should Valium not be prescribed?

If you are sensitive to or have ever had an allergic reaction to Valium, you should not take Valium. Do not take Valium if you have the eye condition known as acute narrow-angle glaucoma. Anxiety or tension related to everyday stress usually does not require treatment with such a powerful drug as Valium. Discuss your symptoms thoroughly with your doctor. Valium should not be prescribed if you are being treated for mental disorders more serious than anxiety.

Special warnings about Valium

Valium may cause you to become drowsy or less alert; therefore, you should not drive or operate dangerous machinery or participate in any hazardous activity that requires full mental alertness until you know how Valium affects you. If you have liver or kidney problems, use Valium cautiously.

Possible food and drug interactions when taking Valium

Valium slows down the central nervous system and may intensify the effects of alcohol. Do not drink alcohol while taking Valium. If Valium 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 Valium with any of the following:

Antiseizure drugs such as Dilantin
Antidepressant drugs such as Elavil and Prozac
Antipsychotic drugs such as Mellaril and chlorpromazine
Barbiturates such as phenobarbital

Cimetidine (Tagamet)
Digoxin (Lanoxin)
Disulfiram (Antabuse)
Fluoxetine (Prozac)
Isoniazid (Rifamate)
Levodopa (Larodopa, Sinemet)
MAO inhibitors (antidepressant drugs such as Nardil)
Narcotics such as Percocet
Omeprazole (Prilosec)
Oral contraceptives
Propoxyphene (Darvon)
Ranitidine (Zantac)
Rifampin (Rifadin)

Special information if you are pregnant or breastfeeding

Do not take Valium if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. There is an increased risk of birth defects. If Valium is essential to your health, your doctor may advise you to discontinue breastfeeding until your treatment is finished.

Recommended dosage

ADULTS

Treatment of Anxiety Disorders and Short-Term Relief of the Symptoms of Anxiety

The usual dose, depending upon severity of symptoms, is 2 milligrams to 10 milligrams 2 to 4 times daily.

Acute Alcohol Withdrawal

The usual dose is 10 milligrams 3 or 4 times during the first 24 hours, then 5 milligrams 3 or 4 times daily as needed.

Relief of Muscle Spasm

The usual dose is 2 milligrams to 10 milligrams 3 or 4 times daily.

Convulsive Disorders

The usual dose is 2 milligrams to 10 milligrams 2 to 4 times daily.

CHILDREN

Valium should not be given to children under 6 months of age.

The usual starting dose for children over 6 months is 1 to 2.5 milligrams 3 or 4 times a day. Your doctor may increase the dosage gradually if needed.

OLDER ADULTS

The usual dosage is 2 milligrams to 2.5 milligrams once or twice a day, which your doctor will increase as needed. Your doctor will limit the dosage to the smallest effective amount because older people are more apt to become oversedated or uncoordinated.

Overdosage

Any medication taken in excess can have serious consequences. If you suspect an overdose, seek medical attention immediately.

- *Symptoms of Valium overdose may include:*
Coma, confusion, diminished reflexes, sleepiness