

Chloral (pron. claw-ral)

What is chloral used for?

Chloral hydrate and chloral betaine are mainly used to help treat insomnia i.e. problems getting to sleep. It is one of a number of medicines called "hypnotics". Chloral betaine (also known as Welldorm[®]) is available as tablets and as a syrup. Chloral hydrate is available as a liquid.

What is the usual dose of Chloral?

The usual dose of chloral hydrate is around 1g at bedtime. The usual dose of chloral betaine is 707-1414mg at bedtime.

How should I take chloral?

Swallow the tablets with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat. For the liquid, use a medicine spoon, dropper or oral syringe. Use it carefully to make sure you measure the correct amount. For the liquids, swallow each dose with plenty of water (about 150ml or most of a tumbler-full of water). This is to help hide the taste, which isn't great.

When should I take chloral?

Take your chloral at bedtime. There is no problem about taking chloral with or after food.

What are the alternatives to chloral?

There are many other medicines (e.g. 'Z hypnotics'), talking therapies and treatments for insomnia and the causes of insomnia. See our "Handy charts" to help you compare the medicines, how they work and their side effects.

How long will chloral take to work?

Chloral usually starts to work in about an hour. The effect wears off in about 4-8 hours or so.

How long will I need to keep taking chloral for?

It is not a good idea to take it every night as the effect may start to wear off. Please look one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice on how long you might need to take it for.

Is chloral addictive?

Chloral can be addictive, and you should be careful about this. It is best to take chloral only when you need it.

Can I stop taking chloral suddenly?

Some people get something called "rebound insomnia" when they stop a hypnotic. This means they find it even more difficult to get to sleep than before. It is best to take chloral only when you need it but if you have taken it every night for more than a few weeks, it would be best to reduce the dose slowly over a few days. You could discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What should I do if I forget to take a dose of chloral?

This is not really a problem. You can take a dose if you are still awake but the effect can last for up to 6-8 hours so be aware that you may feel drowsy in the morning.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking chloral?

If you drink alcohol while taking chloral it may well make you feel more sleepy, especially the next morning. This is particularly important if you need to drive or operate machinery and you must seek advice on this.

Will chloral affect my other medication?

Chloral has only a few interactions with other medicines.

- Chloral can increase the effect of warfarin (for thinning the blood)
- Chloral can decrease the effect of phenytoin
- If chloral is taken with benzodiazepines or alcohol, it may cause more drowsiness
- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and chloral

Not all of these interactions happen in everyone. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions carefully. There are many other possible drug interactions.

What sort of side-effects might occur if I am taking chloral?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from chloral.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
COMMON (<i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Nausea and vomiting	Feeling sick and being sick.	Take your chloral after food. If you are sick for more than a day, contact your doctor. This tends to wear off after a few days or a week or so.
Hangover	You feel sleepy or sluggish the next morning.	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting chloral, tell your doctor. Don't drive or use machinery. Discuss this with your doctor as there are some sleeping tablets that are less likely to do this.
Abdominal distension	Feeling bloated	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting chloral, tell your doctor. It may be possible to reduce your dose.
Flatulence	Passing wind	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting chloral, tell your doctor. It may be possible to reduce your dose.
LESS COMMON (<i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Headache	Your head is pounding and painful.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines you may be taking.
Dizziness	Feeling light-headed and faint.	Don't stand up too quickly. Try and lie or sit down if you feel it coming on. Don't drive.
RARE (<i>less than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i>)		
Confusion	Your mind is all mixed up or confused.	Discuss with your doctor when you next see him or her. He or she may want to adjust your drug or dose.
Amnesia	Loss of short-term memory. Difficulty in remembering.	It is not dangerous. Discuss with your doctor if you are worried.
Rashes	Blotches seen on the skin.	Stop taking chloral and see your doctor now.
OTHER		
Rebound insomnia	More difficult to get to sleep if you stop taking chloral	If you feel like this for more than a week after stopping chloral, tell your doctor.

Do not be worried by this list of side effects. Some people get no side effects at all and others may get some effects that are not listed in this table. If you think you might have a side effect to your medicine, you should ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you want to know more, go to our website for links to other websites with more information.

Will I need a blood test if I am taking chloral?

You should not need a blood test while you are taking chloral.

Can I drive or cycle while I am taking chloral?

You may feel a sleepy the next morning after taking chloral. Until this wears off, or you know how chloral affects you, do not drive or operate machinery. You should be careful as it may slow down your reaction times.

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. You should also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find lots more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions e.g. driving, women's health, how it works, doses and interactions, and about the conditions. The "Handy charts" will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects.