

Haloperidol decanoate (pron. hallo-perry-doll deck-anne-o-eight)

What is haloperidol decanoate used for?

Haloperidol decanoate (also known as Haldol Decanoate[®]) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of psychosis, schizophrenia, or mania. It is known as a 'neuroleptic', 'antipsychotic' or wrongly as a 'major tranquilliser'. Haloperidol decanoate is made as a long-acting or depot injection. Haloperidol is also made as tablets, a syrup and a short-acting injection.

What is the usual dose of haloperidol decanoate?

The usual dose of haloperidol decanoate is around 50-200mg a month. The starting dose should be 50mg every four weeks.

How is haloperidol decanoate given?

Haloperidol decanoate is given by an injection into the buttock muscles. This is usually every four weeks but can be every two weeks. A long-acting injection or depot injection is injected into a muscle and releases haloperidol slowly over a several weeks. This can take the place of taking tablets every day.

What are the alternatives to haloperidol decanoate?

This will depend on what you are having it for. There are many other antipsychotics and medicines, talking therapies and treatments for psychosis, schizophrenia and mania. See our "Handy charts" to help you compare the medicines, how they work and their side effects.

How long will haloperidol decanoate take to work?

It will usually start working within a couple of weeks, with the effect building over the next few weeks. Please look at the "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

How long will I need to keep having haloperidol decanoate for?

This will depend on what you are having it for but probably for several years. Please look at the "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

Is haloperidol decanoate addictive?

Haloperidol decanoate is not addictive as such.

Can I stop having haloperidol decanoate suddenly?

It is unwise to stop having it suddenly, even if you feel better. Your symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some weeks or even many months after the medicine has been stopped. When the time comes, you should stop haloperidol decanoate by a gradual reduction in the dose over several weeks. You should discuss this fully with your doctor.

What should I do if I forget to get a dose of haloperidol decanoate?

Contact your nurse or doctor. You may need a slightly different dose next time to make sure your symptoms do not come back.

Can I drink alcohol while I am having haloperidol decanoate?

If you drink alcohol while having haloperidol decanoate it may make you feel more sleepy. This is particularly important if you need to drive or operate machinery. You must seek advice on this.

Will haloperidol decanoate affect my other medication?

Haloperidol decanoate has only a few interactions with other medicines:

- If haloperidol decanoate is taken with benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam, lorazepam, temazepam) or alcohol, it may cause more sleepiness
- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and haloperidol decanoate.

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 other possible drug interactions.

What sort of side-effects might occur if I am having haloperidol decanoate?

The table will show you some of the main side effects you might get from haloperidol decanoate.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
COMMON (more than about 1 in 10 people might get these)		
Sleepiness	Feeling sleepy or sluggish. It can last for a few hours after having a dose.	Don't drive or use machinery. It should wear off.
Movement disorders (extra-pyramidal side effects)	Having shaky hands. Your eyes and tongue may move on their own. You may feel very restless, or stiff.	It is not usually dangerous but is a well known side effect. If it is distressing or worries you, tell your doctor. He or she may be able to give you a medicine for it e.g. an anticholinergic.
Pain where the injection is given	Pain in the muscle	A warm bath can help, as can exercise. Make sure you have each injection in a different side to the last time.
LESS COMMON (less than about 1 in 10 people might get these)		
Postural hypotension	Low blood pressure - this can make you feel dizzy.	Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy, don't drive.
Headache	When your head is painful.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines you may be taking.
Akathisia	Being more on edge and restless. You may sweat a lot more.	Try and relax by taking deep breaths. Wear loose fitting clothes.
Raised prolactin (hyperprolactinaemia)	It can affect breasts (including milk being leaked) and irregular or no periods in women, or cause impotence and chest changes in men.	It can be very distressing. Discuss with your doctor when you next see him or her as it may possibly even affect your bones if prolactin is raised for a long time.
Constipation	When you want to poop but can't (the opposite of diarrhoea). You can't pass a motion.	Make sure you eat enough fibre, cereal or fruit. Make sure you are drinking enough fluid, keep active and get some exercise e.g. walking. If this does not help, ask your doctor or pharmacist for a mild laxative.
RARE (less than about 1 in 100 people might get these)		
Blurred vision	Things look fuzzy and you can't focus your eyes properly.	Don't drive. See your doctor if you are worried.
Weight gain	Eating more and putting on weight.	A diet full of vegetables and fibre may help prevent weight gain. Ask for advice.
Skin rashes	Blotches seen anywhere on the skin.	See your doctor now.

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 having haloperidol decanoate?

You should sometimes need to have a blood test, to check on some possible side effects e.g. prolactin levels, blood sugar etc. You may also need to have an ECG (heart monitored) before you start haloperidol.

Can I drive or cycle while I am having haloperidol decanoate?

You may feel a bit sleepy at first when having haloperidol decanoate. You should be careful as it may slow down your reaction times. Until this wears off, or you know how haloperidol decanoate affects you, do not drive or operate machinery.

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.