

DIHYDROCODEINE

Brand names DF118 Forte, DHC Continus

Used in the following combined preparations Co-dydramol, Paramol, Remedeine

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dihydrocodeine is an opioid analgesic related to codeine and of similar potency. It is used mainly for the relief of moderately severe pain but has also been used as a cough suppressant. As with codeine, side effects limit the dose that can be taken; dihydrocodeine causes constipation, nausea, and vomiting. The drug is also used in

combination with paracetamol; in this way, a lower dose of the opioid can be used to give pain relief with fewer side effects. A combined preparation containing dihydrocodeine and paracetamol is available under the generic name of co-dydramol.

QUICK REFERENCE

Drug group Opioid analgesic (p.37)

Overdose danger rating High

Dependence rating Medium

Prescription needed Yes (most preparations)

Available as generic Yes

INFORMATION FOR USERS

Your drug prescription is tailored for you. Do not alter dosage without checking with your doctor.

How taken/used



Tablets, SR tablets, liquid, injection.

Frequency and timing of doses
2–6 x daily.

Adult dosage range
120–240mg daily.

Onset of effect
30–60 minutes (tablets, liquid); 3–4 hours (SR tablets).

Duration of action
4–6 hours (tablets, liquid); 12 hours (SR tablets).

Diet advice
None.

Storage

Keep in original container at room temperature out of the reach of children.

Missed dose

Take as soon as you remember if needed for relief of symptoms. If not needed, do not take the missed dose, and return to your normal dosage schedule when necessary.

Stopping the drug

Can be safely stopped as soon as you no longer need it.

OVERDOSE ACTION



Seek immediate medical advice in all cases. Take emergency action if slow or irregular breathing, severe drowsiness, or loss of consciousness occur.

See Drug poisoning emergency guide (p.510).

SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

Be sure to tell your doctor if:

- You have liver or kidney problems.
- You have a phaeochromocytoma.
- You have a lung disorder such as asthma or bronchitis.
- You have a problem with alcohol abuse.
- You have an enlarged prostate.
- You have low blood pressure.
- You have an underactive thyroid.
- You are taking other medicines.



Pregnancy

Safety in pregnancy not established. The drug may affect the baby's breathing in labour.



Breast-feeding

Safety not established. Discuss with your doctor.



Infants and children

Not recommended for children under 4 years. In children over 4 years a reduced dose is necessary.



Over 60

Reduced dose necessary.



Driving and hazardous work

Avoid such activities until you have learned how dihydrocodeine affects you because the drug may cause drowsiness, dizziness, and confusion.



Alcohol

Avoid. Alcohol may increase the sedative effects of the drug.

POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS

The most common adverse effects are constipation, nausea, vomiting, headache,

and vertigo. Tolerance and dependence may occur.

Symptom/effect	Frequency		Discuss with doctor		Stop taking drug now	Call doctor now
	Common	Rare	Only if severe	In all cases		
Constipation	●		●			
Nausea/vomiting	●		●			
Drowsiness/dizziness	●		●			
Headache	●		●			
Abdominal pain		●	●			
Rash/itching		●		●		
Confusion/hallucinations		●		●		
Breathing difficulties		●		●	●	●

INTERACTIONS

Sedatives All drugs that have a sedative effect on the central nervous system increase dihydrocodeine's sedative properties. They include other opioid analgesics, sleeping drugs, antihistamines, antipsychotics, and antidepressants.

Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) may cause a dangerous rise in blood pressure. Avoid using together and for 14 days after stopping MAOI treatment.

PROLONGED USE

Dihydrocodeine is generally only used in the short term since it can be habit forming if used long term.