

Chlordiazepoxide

Librium, Librax (with clidinium), a benzodiazepine, a long-acting calming medicine

Chlordiazepoxide is a long-acting calming medicine used most often to make alcohol withdrawal safer and steadier.

WHAT IT TREATS

Alcohol withdrawal, anxiety

HOW YOU TAKE IT

By mouth, as prescribed

WHEN IT WORKS

1 to 2 hours

HABIT FORMING

Yes, your body adapts

⚠️ IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

Mixing **chlordiazepoxide** with opioids or alcohol can slow or stop your breathing. Your body comes to depend on it, so stopping suddenly can cause seizures and can be life-threatening. Only your prescriber tapers it. Store it safely; others may misuse it.

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Chlordiazepoxide** is a benzodiazepine. It calms an overexcited nervous system, which is exactly what alcohol withdrawal is.
- During withdrawal it lowers the shaking, sweating, and racing heart, and it protects you against withdrawal seizures.
- It is long-acting, so the level in your body drops gently. That smooth decline is why it is chosen for this job.
- For withdrawal it is a short course of days, not an ongoing medicine. That plan is intentional and it is a good sign.

⌚ HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it exactly as scheduled during withdrawal, even if you feel fine at that moment. Skipping doses lets symptoms rebuild.
- You can take it with or without food. If it unsettles your stomach, a little food alongside usually helps.
- Swallow the capsule whole with water. Do not open it, because that changes how fast the medicine reaches you.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless the next one is close. Never take two at once to make up ground.
- Store it out of reach of children and visitors, ideally locked. One capsule can seriously harm a small child.

🔧 WHAT TO EXPECT

- You will usually feel steadier within **1 to 2 hours**, and the calm holds for many hours because it lasts a long time.
- Withdrawal symptoms typically peak in the first **2 to 3 days** and ease over the following few days.
- Your prescriber steps the amount down as your symptoms settle. Getting less each day means you are improving.
- Working looks like a manageable, less frightening few days, with no seizure and no confusion, not feeling nothing at all.

♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Sleepiness is the most common effect and it can carry into the next day, since this medicine leaves the body slowly.
- Feeling unsteady is common, and falls are a real risk during withdrawal. Move slowly and ask for a hand if you need one.
- Slowed thinking and patchy memory can happen. Have someone else hold onto important instructions for a few days.
- Dry mouth, nausea, or constipation can show up. Sip fluids often and add fruit or fiber if things slow down.
- Older adults get more sleepiness and unsteadiness from this than younger adults do, so extra caution is worth it.
- A few people feel agitated or short-tempered rather than calm. That is worth reporting rather than riding out.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Very slow or shallow breathing, blue lips, or being hard to wake up: call **911** right away.
- A seizure, or seeing or hearing things that are not there: call **911**. Withdrawal can turn dangerous quickly.
- New or worse thoughts of hurting yourself: call your prescriber today, or call or text **988** if you might act.
- Yellowing of your eyes or skin, or a rash that spreads: call your prescriber the same day.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Opioid pain medicine plus **chlordiazepoxide** can stop your breathing. Every prescriber and pharmacist must know about both.
- Do not drink while taking this. Alcohol and this medicine together slow your breathing, and the mix is unpredictable.
- Do not drive during a withdrawal course, and not until you are fully clear-headed. Grogginess can carry into the next day.
- Ask your pharmacist before adding sleep aids, muscle relaxers, or antihistamines, since they add to the drowsiness.
- If you are pregnant, nursing, or planning a pregnancy, tell your prescriber before starting or stopping this.

⌚ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- A short withdrawal course is meant to end, and your prescriber steps it down for you over several days.
- If you have taken it regularly for weeks or longer, never stop suddenly. That can cause seizures and can be life-threatening.
- Because it clears slowly, withdrawal symptoms can show up a few days late. Keep your follow-up visit even if you feel fine.
- Ask what comes next after the taper. Support and, for some people, a medicine for alcohol cravings makes the difference.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How many days should this course last, and what ends it?
- What symptoms mean I need to be seen right away tonight?
- Which of my other medicines could slow my breathing with this?
- What treatment or support comes after this taper ends?

Where this information comes from

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<https://www.asam.org/quality-care/clinical-guidelines/alcohol-withdrawal-management-guideline>

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NOTE

Sources are listed in APA 7th edition style. This handout is general information about a medicine, not medical advice, and it does not replace the instructions from your own prescriber or pharmacist. Never start, change, or stop a medicine on your own. If you think you are having a serious reaction, call your prescriber; if you cannot breathe, cannot stay awake, or are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or 988 right away.