

Chlorpromazine

Thorazine (brand discontinued; generic only), an older antipsychotic medicine

Chlorpromazine settles hallucinations, mania, and severe agitation, and smaller amounts are also used for stubborn nausea or hiccups.

WHAT IT TREATS

Psychosis, mania, nausea

HOW YOU TAKE IT

Pills a few times a day

WHEN IT WORKS

Calm in hours; 2-6 weeks

HABIT FORMING

No

⚠️ IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

Older adults with dementia who take antipsychotic medicines have a higher risk of death. Chlorpromazine is not approved for hallucinations or agitation caused by dementia.

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Chlorpromazine** was the first modern antipsychotic. It turns down the brain signal behind hallucinations, false beliefs, and mania.
- It is more calming than most antipsychotics, which is useful when agitation or sleepless nights are part of the problem.
- In much smaller amounts it also treats severe nausea, vomiting, and hiccups that will not stop, even in people without psychosis.
- It is not a sleeping pill and not a sedative to take whenever you feel stressed. It is a scheduled, daily treatment.

🕒 HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it at the same times each day, usually spread across the day. Food is fine and often makes it easier on your stomach.
- Measure the liquid form with the dropper or syringe from the pharmacy, and mix it into juice or water if you prefer.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless the next one is near. Then skip it and go back to your usual times.
- Wear sunscreen and a hat from day one. This medicine burns skin far faster than usual, sometimes within minutes outdoors.
- Store it at room temperature, away from light and damp, and keep the liquid off your skin, since it can irritate.

📈 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Agitation, sleep, and nausea often improve within hours or days. Hallucinations settle over **2 to 6 weeks**.
- Working looks like a quieter mind, easier nights, and being able to follow a conversation without fear crowding in.
- Sleepiness is strongest in the first week or two and usually softens as your body gets used to the medicine.
- Your prescriber will watch blood pressure, movements, and liver blood tests early on. Those checks are part of the plan.
- If it makes you too sleepy to function, that is worth a call. Timing or the medicine itself can often be changed.

♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Sleepiness affects most people early. An evening dose helps, and it usually fades over the first couple of weeks.
- Dizziness or faintness when you stand up. Rise slowly, sit on the bed a moment first, and keep well hydrated.
- Dry mouth and blurry near vision. Sip water, chew sugar-free gum, and wait a few weeks before changing glasses.
- Constipation is common. Water, fiber, and daily walking help, and your pharmacist can suggest a stool softener.
- Muscle stiffness, slowed movement, or a restless, cannot-sit-still feeling. Report these, because both are treatable.
- Sunburn happens fast on this medicine. Sunscreen, long sleeves, and shade at midday prevent most of the trouble.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Go to the ER for high fever with stiff muscles, confusion, and a pounding pulse. This is a rare emergency.
- Call the same day for yellow eyes or skin, dark urine, or bad belly pain, which can mean a liver problem.
- Report lip smacking, tongue rolling, or jaw movements you cannot control as soon as you notice them.
- Call **911** for fainting, a seizure, or a heartbeat that flutters or pounds and will not settle.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Alcohol multiplies the sleepiness and the drop in blood pressure. Talk with your prescriber before you drink at all.
- Do not drive or use machinery until you know how sleepy and steady you are, which can take a week or two.
- Hot weather is harder on you now, because this medicine blunts your ability to cool down. Drink water and rest in shade.
- Opioid pain medicines, sleep aids, and some antidepressants stack with this one. Show your full list to any prescriber.
- Tell your prescriber if you are pregnant, might be, or are breastfeeding, so the safest choice can be made together.

⏸️ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Do not stop suddenly. Abrupt stops bring nausea, sweating, sleepless nights, and a quick return of symptoms.
- Your prescriber will lower it in steps over several weeks, which is far gentler and easier to live through.
- New movements sometimes appear as the dose comes down. Call about them instead of stopping the taper yourself.
- If side effects are why you want to quit, say so. There are many other antipsychotics, and switching is normal.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Is this dose meant to treat psychosis, or nausea and hiccups?
- How do we handle the daytime sleepiness if it does not fade?
- What sunscreen and clothing do you recommend for me in summer?
- How often will you check my liver and blood counts?

Where this information comes from

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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.