

Haloperidol

Haldol, Haldol Decanoate, an older antipsychotic medicine

Haloperidol calms hallucinations, false beliefs, and severe agitation, and it can quiet the tics of Tourette syndrome.

WHAT IT TREATS

Schizophrenia, tics

HOW YOU TAKE IT

Daily pills or monthly shot

WHEN IT WORKS

Hours to calm; 2-6 weeks

HABIT FORMING

No

⚠️ IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

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

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Haloperidol** turns down the brain signal that drives hallucinations, false beliefs, and agitation, so your own thinking has room again.
- It has been used since the 1960s and is still one of the most reliable medicines for calming psychosis quickly.
- It also reduces the sudden movements and sounds of Tourette syndrome when other treatments have not been enough.
- It does not sedate you into a fog when it is dosed well, and it is not a tranquilizer you take whenever you feel upset.

🕒 HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it at the same times each day, with or without food. If it upsets your stomach, a small snack usually settles it.
- The liquid form must be measured with the dropper or syringe that came with it, never with a kitchen spoon.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember. If your next one is close, skip the missed dose and carry on as usual.
- The long-acting shot is given about once a month. Keep those appointments, since protection fades if one is missed.
- Store pills at room temperature and keep the liquid away from light. Do not use liquid that has changed color.

📈 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Agitation and sleep often improve within hours to days. Hallucinations and false beliefs fade over **2 to 6 weeks**.
- Working looks like voices getting quieter or easier to ignore, and daily life feeling less crowded by fear.
- You may feel calmer before you feel clearer. That gap is normal, so give the medicine a fair number of weeks.
- If you get the monthly shot, it can take **2 to 3 months** to reach full strength, so keep taking any pills you were told to.
- Your prescriber will watch your movements at visits. That check takes a minute and catches problems early.

♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Muscle stiffness, slowed movement, or a shuffling walk can appear early. Report it, because it is treatable with another medicine.
- A restless, cannot-sit-still feeling in your legs is common and very uncomfortable. It responds well to treatment, so speak up.
- Sleepiness and dizziness on standing. Rise slowly, drink enough water, and take the dose in the evening if allowed.
- Dry mouth and blurry near vision. Sip water, chew sugar-free gum, and give reading glasses a few weeks before changing them.
- Missed periods, breast tenderness or milk, and lower sex drive can happen. These come from a hormone change and can be managed.
- Constipation is common. Water, fiber, and daily walking help, and your pharmacist can suggest a gentle stool softener.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Go to the ER for high fever with stiff muscles, confusion, and a racing pulse. This is a rare emergency.
- Call right away for a sudden neck twist, jaw lock, or eyes rolling upward. It is frightening but fixable fast.
- Report lip smacking, tongue rolling, or jaw movements you cannot control the moment you notice them.
- Call **911** for fainting, or a heartbeat that flutters or pounds and will not settle down.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Alcohol adds to sleepiness and unsteadiness and makes psychosis harder to treat. Talk with your prescriber before drinking.
- Do not drive or use machinery until you know how alert and steady you feel, which usually takes a week or two.
- This medicine makes it harder to shed heat. In hot weather, drink water, take breaks in the shade, and skip saunas.
- Some antidepressants, seizure medicines, and antibiotics change your level or your heart rhythm. Share your full list.
- Tell your prescriber if you are pregnant, might be, or are breastfeeding, so the safest plan can be chosen together.

① STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Do not stop suddenly. Symptoms can come back hard, and a fast stop can bring nausea, sweating, and sleepless nights.
- Your prescriber will lower it over weeks. Slow steps also make any movement problems easier to spot and treat.
- New movements sometimes appear when the dose comes down. That is a reason to call, not a reason to quit on your own.
- If you want to be off this medicine, say so plainly. There are other options, and a planned switch beats stopping cold.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What should I do if I feel stiff or cannot sit still?
- How often will you check my movements, and what are you looking for?
- Would the monthly shot fit my life better than daily pills?
- Which of my other medicines could affect my heart rhythm?

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.