

Propranolol

Inderal LA, InnoPran XL, Hemangeol, a beta blocker, a medicine that blunts the physical side of adrenaline

Propranolol takes the edge off the physical side of anxiety: the pounding heart, the shaky hands, the tight voice.

WHAT IT TREATS

Performance anxiety, tremor

HOW YOU TAKE IT

Daily, or before an event

WHEN IT WORKS

Under an hour, if as-needed

HABIT FORMING

No

✔ This medicine carries **no special FDA safety warning** of that kind.

1 WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Propranolol** blocks adrenaline at your heart and muscles, so your pulse settles, your hands steady, and your voice stops shaking.
- It works on the body, not the mind. Your worried thoughts stay yours to work on, but the physical alarm underneath them quiets down.
- It is also used for high blood pressure, migraine prevention, and the fine hand tremor some other medicines cause.
- It is not a tranquilizer and it is not habit forming. It does not make you sleepy or fuzzy the way sedatives can.

2 HOW TO TAKE IT

- For a speech, audition, or exam, take it about **1 hour** beforehand, as your prescriber directs. Try it once at home first.
- If you take it every day, take it at the same time each day. Long-acting capsules are usually taken once in the morning.
- Swallow long-acting capsules whole. Do not crush, chew, or split them, because that releases the whole dose at once.
- If you miss a daily dose, take it when you remember unless your next one is close. Then skip it. Never take two at once.
- Keep it at room temperature, away from steam and damp, and out of reach of children and pets.

3 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Taken before an event, it usually works within **30 to 60 minutes** and lasts for a few hours after that.
- Working looks like a steady voice and still hands. You may still feel nervous inside, and that is the medicine doing its job.
- Taken daily for blood pressure or migraine, it needs several weeks before you can judge whether it helps.
- Your resting pulse will be slower than you are used to. That is expected, not a problem, unless you feel faint or worn out.
- It does not build up a tolerance. A dose that helped you last month should still help you next month.

4 COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Feeling tired or heavy-legged is the most common effect. It often eases over a couple of weeks as your body adjusts.
- Cold hands and feet are common. Gloves and warm socks help more than anything else, and it is not dangerous.
- Lightheadedness when you stand up can happen. Stand up slowly and give yourself a moment before you walk.
- Vivid dreams or restless sleep sometimes show up. Taking your daily dose in the morning can help if your prescriber agrees.
- Some people feel flat or low in mood on it. That is worth mentioning, because other options exist.
- Mild stomach upset, loose stools, or nausea usually fade. Taking it with food often settles it.

5 CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Call **911** for chest pain, trouble breathing, or wheezing that will not ease.
- Call **911** if you faint, or if your pulse feels very slow and you feel weak.
- Call your prescriber for new swelling in your ankles or sudden weight gain.
- Call **988** if you feel low enough that thoughts of ending your life show up.

6 WHAT TO AVOID

- Do not stop this suddenly. Stopping all at once can send your blood pressure and pulse racing back and strain your heart.
- Tell your prescriber if you have asthma or any lung condition. This medicine can tighten the airways in some people.
- If you have diabetes, know that it can hide the shakiness that warns you your blood sugar is low. Check more often.
- Alcohol adds to the lightheadedness. Go carefully until you know how the two feel together.
- Check with a pharmacist before adding cold remedies, migraine medicines, or new blood pressure pills.

7 STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Never stop on your own, even if you feel fine. Your prescriber will lower it in steps over **1 to 2 weeks**.
- Stopping suddenly can cause a racing pulse, a jump in blood pressure, and chest pain, especially if you have heart disease.
- If you have run out or missed several days, call your prescriber rather than simply restarting your old amount.
- If you only take it now and then before events, there is nothing to lower slowly. Ask your prescriber to confirm that fits you.

8 QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Should I take this every day, or only before stressful events?
- Is this safe with my asthma, my diabetes, or my heart?
- What resting pulse is too slow for me to take the next dose?
- How would we lower this slowly if I want to come off it?

Where this information comes from

MedlinePlus. (2023). *Propranolol*. National Library of Medicine. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a682607.html>

MedlinePlus. (n.d.). *Anxiety*. National Library of Medicine. <https://medlineplus.gov/anxiety.html>

MedlinePlus. (n.d.). *High blood pressure*. National Library of Medicine. <https://medlineplus.gov/highbloodpressure.html>

National Alliance on Mental Illness. (n.d.). *Mental health medications*. <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Treatments/Mental-Health-Medications/>

National Institute of Mental Health. (n.d.). *Mental health medications*. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-health-medications>

National Library of Medicine. (n.d.). *DailyMed*. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/>

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.