Patient Education

Hydrocodone & Acetaminophen
(hye-droe-KOE-done & a-set-a-MEE-noe-fen)

Other Names
Lortab®, Anexsia®, Co-gesic®, Lorcet-HD®, Norco®, Panacet®, Vicodin®, and Zydone® (There may be other names for this medication.)

How Do I Take This Medication?
The combination of hydrocodone and acetaminophen comes as a tablet, capsule, or liquid. Take the tablet or capsule with a full glass of water. If it upsets your stomach, take it with food. Do not use more medicine than your doctor tells you.

Why Am I Taking This Medication?
This combination of drugs is used to relieve moderate to moderately-severe pain.

How Does It Work?
Hydrocodone is an opioid (narcotic) analgesic. It works by decreasing the brain and nervous system’s response to pain. Acetaminophen relieves fever and pain and it is not an opioid.

What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen?
Tell your doctor if you:
• are allergic to acetaminophen, codeine, hydrocodone, sulfite, or any other medications
• or anyone in your family has ever abused drugs or alcohol or had a drug addiction
• have kidney disease, liver disease, or heart rhythm problems
• have breathing problems, such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
• have a recent head injury, a brain tumor, or a history of seizures
• are breastfeeding, pregnant, or trying to get pregnant

This drug may interact with other medications or cause harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal, or diet supplements that you are taking.

How Do I Store Hydrocodone?
• Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children.
• Store it at room temperature and away from light and excess heat and moisture (not in the bathroom).
• Throw away any medication that is outdated or no longer needed.
What Are Some Possible Side Effects I May Experience?

Although side effects from acetaminophen and hydrocodone are not common, they can occur. Tell your doctor if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away:

• lightheadedness or dizziness
• drowsiness
• upset stomach, stomach pain, or vomiting
• constipation
• rash or itching
• difficulty urinating

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

• To help avoid constipation, eat high fiber foods and drink at least 2-3 quarts of fluid every 24 hours, unless you are instructed otherwise.
• Ask your doctor about medication to prevent or treat constipation, nausea, or headache.
• Using lotion may relieve itching. Keep the area clean.
• If nausea or itching lasts more than 1 week, talk to your doctor.
• To help avoid dizziness when you change positions quickly, get out of bed slowly. Rest your feet on the floor for a few minutes before you stand up.
• Ice chips, drinking plenty of water, and rinsing your mouth with an alcohol-free mouthwash may help with a dry mouth.

When Should I Call the Doctor?

Call your doctor immediately if you experience:

• any sign of an allergic reaction: itching, hives, swelling in your face or hands, swelling or tingling in your mouth or throat, chest tightness, trouble breathing, dizziness, or fast/pounding heartbeat (palpitations)
• any sign of an overdose: difficulty breathing, excessive sleepiness, hallucinations, fainting, weak muscles, cold and clammy skin, slow heartbeat (pulse) or a bluish color in your skin, fingernails, lips, or around your mouth
• seizures
• vomiting more than once in a single day
• yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes

Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have the following less serious side effects:

• constipation
• lightheadedness, sleepiness, or drowsiness that does not go away
• nausea that does not go away or any single episodes of vomiting

What Else Should I Know About this Medication?

• If you have been taking this medication for an extended period of time, do not stop taking it suddenly. Your doctor may need to decrease your dose gradually to prevent withdrawal symptoms.
• Do not let anyone else take your medication.
• Tell your doctor if your pain is not well controlled, or if you have new or a different type of pain.
• Do not drink alcohol while on this medication.
• Take this medication exactly as prescribed by your provider.
• This drug may cause drowsiness or dizziness. Do not drive a car, operate heavy machinery, or participate in other possibly dangerous activities until you know how this medication affects you.

Many combination medicines contain acetaminophen, including products with brand names such as Alka-Seltzer Plus®, Comtrex®, Drixoral®, Excedrin Migraine®, Midol®, Sinutab®, Sudafed®, Theraflu®, Vanquish®, and Tylenol®. Carefully check the labels of all the medications you are taking. Add up the milligrams of acetaminophen in each product. **Be sure that you do not take more than 4 grams (4,000 milligrams) of acetaminophen in 1 day (24 hours).**

• If you would like more information about hydrocodone and acetaminophen, talk to your doctor.