

Antispasmodics: Dicyclomine (Bentyl), Hyoscyamine (Anaspaz, Levsin, Levsinex, LevBid, Nulev)

What are antispasmodics? These drug acts on the muscle in the wall of the gut and also the urinary bladder. They relax the muscle and prevent spasms from occurring.

What is it used for? The main role of these drugs is to prevent painful spasm of the gut and urinary bladder. The following conditions may be helped: diarrhea, irritable or spastic bowel, diverticulosis, colic and bladder spasm

How do I take it? Follow your physician's instructions carefully. Take these medicines 30 to 60 minutes before eating for best results. If you also take an antacid, take the antacid after the meal. Taking an antacid at the same time as an antispasmodic can interfere with the absorption of this drug. Store at room temperature in a tightly sealed container. Keep all medications away from children. Never share your medications with anyone else.

What do I do for a missed dose? If you miss a dose of this medicine, take it as soon as possible. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular schedule. Do not double up on this medication.

Are there interactions with food or beverages? There are no known food interactions with antispasmodics. These drugs can cause constipation which can be prevented by using foods rich in fiber and bran. Alcohol should be used with caution or avoided completely because the combination may cause excessive sedation.

Are there interactions with other drugs? An interaction generally means that one drug may increase or decrease the effect of another drug. Also, the more medications a person takes, the more likely there will be a drug interaction. Interactions with these drugs may occur with the following:

- monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitors (Nardil, Parnate)
- sedatives (Ambien, Dalmane, Restoril)
- antidepressants (Haldol, Elavil)
- antacids
- antihistamines (Benadryl)
- cimetidine (Tagamet)
- prednisone
- digoxin (Lanoxin)
- metoclopramide (Reglan)
- thiazide diuretics (Dyazide, hydrochlorothiazide)
- amantadine (Symmetrel)
- cardiac rhythm regulators (Pronestyl, quinidine)

Is there a problem if I have another disorder or disease? At times, a drug may have a different or enhanced effect when other diseases are present. At other times, the drug may worsen or affect another disease. With this drug, the following disorders may be a problem:

- glaucoma

- prostate enlargement - BPH
- hypertension (high blood pressure)
- congestive heart failure
- severe ulcerative colitis where bowel movements have stopped

What about allergies? People who have known allergies or asthma may be at an increased risk for a reaction from any new medication. Signs of an allergic reaction are skin rash, hives and itching. Of course, a person should not take an antispasmodic if there has been a previous reaction to other antispasmodic drugs.

What if I'm pregnant, considering pregnancy or breast-feeding? Any drug taken during pregnancy is potentially dangerous to a fetus. The FDA has a grading system for each drug which reflects what is known medically. Dicyclomine is ranked B. This means it is not expected to be harmful to an unborn baby. Hyoscyamine is ranked C meaning it is not known if it is safe to the unborn baby. Do not take antispasmodics if you are breast-feeding a baby; they can cause serious breathing problems in infants younger than 6 months of age. Always consult the physician before taking any drug during or when planning pregnancy.

What are the effects on sexual function? Antispasmodics can cause impotence in some patients.

Are there other precautions?

- Antispasmodics may make you dizzy, drowsy or blur your vision. Do not drive or operate hazardous machinery while taking this medication until the effects of the drug have been determined.
- Antispasmodics may decrease your ability to perspire. Do not become overheated in extremely hot weather or during exercise or other activities, as heat stroke may occur.
- Severe mental changes have occasionally been reported in individuals who are sensitive to this group of drugs. Symptoms include confusion, short-term memory loss, hallucinations or agitation. These symptoms usually resolve within 12 to 48 hours after discontinuation of the drug.
- Antispasmodics should not be used in infants less than 6 months of age. It has been reported to cause serious respiratory problems in infants.

How long is it safe to take Antispasmodics? The side effects are usually the limiting factor in the length of use of antispasmodics. As long as the side effects are tolerable or there is no change in the intensity of the side effects, these drugs can be used long-term with physician supervision.

How about side effects? Adverse reactions can occur with any drug, even over-the-counter medications. Some of these are mild such as a stomach upset, which may be avoided by taking the medication with food. Minor reactions may go away on their own but if they persist, contact the physician. For major reactions, the patient should contact the physician immediately. For Antispasmodics, the following are the observed side effects:

Minor:

Headache, drowsiness, dizziness, rapid heartbeat, dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, constipation, rash

Major:

Difficult urination, confusion, blurred vision

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