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If you have anxiety or panic disorder, or you suffer from seizures, you may be prescribed Klonopin. You may also be familiar with its generic name, Clonazepam.

Klonopin is a high alert medication, which means if you do not take it exactly as prescribed, it may cause illness or injury.

To understand how Klonopin works, let's look at how anxiety and panic disorder affect your body.

Your brain is constantly firing information and messages to the rest of your body, telling you what to think, what to feel and what to do. When you are faced with a situation that makes you anxious or causes you to panic, your brain puts you in a state of alert and gets you ready to face the situation.

When it passes, the nerve signals in your brain slow down and your body calms. But when you suffer from anxiety or panic disorders, your brain can't turn off that state of alert.

Klonopin enhances a chemical in the brain called GABA, which helps calm you down. And it slows pain signals going down the spine to help reduce muscle spasms.

Klonopin comes in a tablet or wafer, which dissolves on your tongue. Your healthcare provider will decide how much you need to take, but dosages range from 0.5 milligrams to 2 milligrams.

Klonopin is a powerful medication. Some people should not take it. Do not take Klonopin if you are allergic to other anti-anxiety medications like Xanax or Valium. If you are allergic to Phenylalanine, do not use the orally dissolving wafers.

Do not take Klonopin if you have severe liver disease or glaucoma.

If you are pregnant, or planning to get pregnant, tell your healthcare provider before taking Klonopin. Do not breastfeed while taking it.

Before taking Klonopin, tell your healthcare provider if you have a history of: liver or kidney problems, asthma or other breathing problems, glaucoma, or depression or suicidal thoughts.

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Klonopin can be highly addictive. If you have a history of abuse of: street drugs, prescription medications, or alcohol, tell your healthcare provider. There may be a different medication available for you.

Before taking Klonopin, give your healthcare provider a complete list of all other medications you use, including vitamins and herbal supplements.

Some side effects of Klonopin include: dizziness, feeling tired, feeling lightheaded, clumsiness, confusion, or coughing.

If you do notice any of these side effects, contact your healthcare provider about how to manage them.

Eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice while taking Klonopin can increase your side effects. If you do eat grapefruit, eat or drink about the same amount every day to avoid an increase in side effects.

Be aware that you are at an increased risk of falling while taking Klonopin. Get up from a sitting or lying position slowly.

Do not drive or operate heavy machinery, including your car, until you know how Klonopin affects you.

Do not drink alcohol while taking Klonopin. Klonopin can increase the effects of alcohol.

If you have an allergic reaction like: trouble breathing, hives, or swelling of your face or throat, call 911.

If you have: hallucinations or unusual behaviors, suicidal thoughts, trouble breathing, fast or pounding heartbeats, or your seizures get worse, call 911 and get help right away.

This is not a complete list of side effects. Make sure you discuss all possible side effects with your healthcare provider.

Take Klonopin exactly as prescribed. Do not change your dose or take it for longer than prescribed.

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When taking a Klonopin tablet, always swallow the tablet whole with plenty of water.

If you are taking a Klonopin wafer, make sure your hands are dry and peel back the cover of the package. Place the wafer on your tongue and let it dissolve. Do not swallow the wafer whole or chew it.

Klonopin may be taken on a regular schedule or as needed. If you do take it regularly and skip a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip your missed dose and return to your normal medication schedule.

Do not double dose. If you think you have taken too much Klonopin, call 911. An overdose of Klonopin can lead to death.

Store Klonopin away from moisture and direct sunlight. Your bathroom medicine cabinet is not the best place because of moisture.

Klonopin wafers should always be kept in their package until use. Do not leave your medication where it can get too hot or too cold. Always store your medication out of sight and out of reach of children to prevent accidents.

Because Klonopin can cause dependency, it can be a very desirable drug to addicts. Lock this medication up to prevent stealing and abuse.

When you are done taking Klonopin tablets, crush all of your remaining pills and mix them with undesirable trash like kitty litter or coffee grounds.

Do not sell or give your Klonopin to anyone else. It is against the law and can seriously harm anyone else taking it. Contact your local police station for more information on proper disposal directions.

Klonopin can help you manage anxiety, panic or seizures. But it is a powerful medication that should only be taken exactly as prescribed. If you have any questions about Klonopin, ask your healthcare provider and pharmacist for more information.