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If you have moderate to severe pain, you may be prescribed Percodan.

Percodan 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 Percodan works, let's look at how pain affects your body.

Thousands of tiny nerve cells in your body sense many feelings; cold, heat, pressure, and pain. When your body is injured, the tiny nerve cells send a message to your brain that says: I'm in pain here!

Percodan is a combination of two different pain relief medications; Oxycodone and Aspirin and comes in a tablet.

It works in two ways to help relieve pain. Aspirin works to reduce the chemicals in your body that cause pain, fever and inflammation; while Oxycodone blocks the pain signals to the brain.

When you are prescribed Percodan, the medication label will show two dosage numbers. The first, 4.8 mg is the amount of Oxycodone, and the second, 325 mg, is the amount of Aspirin prescribed to you.

Percodan is a powerful medication. Some people should not take it. Do not take Percodan if you are allergic to Oxycodone, Aspirin or other pain relievers like Aleve, Motrin or Advil.

Do not take Percodan if you have asthma, trouble breathing, a bleeding disorder or are taking a blood thinner like Warfarin or Coumadin.

Do not take this medication if you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant. Do not breastfeed while taking Percodan.

Before taking Percodan, tell your healthcare provider if you have a history of: head injury and stroke; stomach ulcers or bleeding; liver, kidney or thyroid problems; or pancreas problems.

Percodan 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.

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

Some side effects of Percodan include: constipation, upset stomach, heartburn, headache, dizziness, drowsiness, or dry mouth.

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

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

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

Do not drink alcohol while taking Percodan. Drinking alcohol while taking Percodan can cause serious side effects leading to death.

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

If you have: weak or shallow breathing; chest pain; slow heartbeats; fast or pounding heartbeats; severe stomach pain and vomiting; unusual bruising or bleeding; black, tarry stool; or feel like you may pass out, 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 Percodan exactly as prescribed. Do not change your dose or take it for longer than prescribed.

Always swallow the tablet whole with plenty of water. Drink six to eight glasses of water a day to avoid constipation.

Percodan is taken when needed, so you may not be on a dosing schedule. 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.

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Do not double dose. If you think you have taken too much Percodan, call 911. An overdose of Percodan can cause serious breathing problems that can lead to death.

Store Percodan away from moisture and direct sunlight. Your bathroom medicine cabinet is not the best place because of moisture. 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 Percodan is a narcotic that 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 Percodan 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 Percodan 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.

Percodan can help you relieve your pain. But it is a powerful medication that should only be taken exactly as prescribed. If you have any questions about Percodan, ask your healthcare provider and pharmacist for more information.