

MUSCLE RELAXANTS

You May Be at Risk For a Fall

If you are taking one of these muscle relaxants:

Cyclobenzaprine

- Amrix
- Fexmid

Methocarbamol

- Robaxin
- Robaxin 750

Carisoprodol

- Soma

Baclofen

- Gablofen

Chlorzoxazone

- Lorzone

Metaxalone

- Metaxall
- Skelaxin

Orphenadrine

- Norflex

Tizanidine

- Zanaflex



Test Your Knowledge About Muscle Relaxants

	TRUE	FALSE
1. These medications do not cause side effects if taken for a long time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Low doses of this medication do not cause side effects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Stopping this medication may cause my original symptoms to return.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. These medications are the best option to treat pain or muscle stiffness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Did you know?

These medications are used for muscle pain, stiffness or spasms among other uses. Check with your doctor before changing or stopping these medications.

Answers

1 FALSE: These medications do not cause side effects if taken for a long time.

Older adults can experience side effects even if they have been using the medication for a long time. Muscle relaxants can increase the risk of experiencing:

- Dizziness, falls, and fractures
- Memory and concentration problems
- Feeling tired during the day
- Problems with constipation and bladder control

2 FALSE: Low doses of this medication do not cause side effects.

Even a small dose of this medication may have side effects. It may reduce your mental ability and slow your reflexes, increasing your risk of fall or injury.

3 TRUE: Stopping this medication may cause my original symptoms to return.

Reducing or stopping this medication may cause your pain to return. However, slowly reducing this medication and finding other ways to manage pain can reduce your risk of falls and injury.

4 FALSE: These medications are the best option to treat pain and muscle stiffness.

Muscle relaxants may relieve your symptoms, but they do not address the underlying problem. They can also cause side effects that increase your risk of falling. Consider an alternate treatment.



**Want to learn
more?**

The enclosed information offers your resources on how to manage pain. This information can help you choose a safer alternative.

Did you know?

- ▶ As you age muscle relaxants remain in your body for longer periods of time. This happens because our liver and kidneys take more time to remove medications. This means a dose that was once safe may start causing side effects.
- ▶ These medications can impair balance, increase falls and fractures, and cause memory problems or loss of bladder control. They may cause daytime drowsiness, which could result in a car crash.
- ▶ Other treatments can help relieve your pain with fewer side effects and lower risk of falls.

Even if you are NOT experiencing side effects, talk with your doctor or pharmacist about safer treatment options.



So ask yourself

	YES	NO
• Are you often tired or sleepy during the day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do you ever feel hungover in the morning, even though you have not been drinking? Hangover symptoms include headache, nausea, dizziness, or sensitivity to light.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do you ever have problems with your memory or your balance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, talk to your doctor or pharmacist to see if this medicine is causing your symptoms.



Alternatives for Muscle Relaxants Used for Chronic Pain Management

There are other ways to deal with your chronic pain. Using several may help.

Self-care

- Get 7-8 hours of sleep most nights
- Eat a balanced diet with fruits and vegetables
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Incorporate physical exercise to your daily routine to increase your strength, flexibility, and endurance

Medications, procedures, and devices

- Try topical pain medications or lidocaine patches that you can apply to the area with pain.
- Ask your doctor about other oral medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil).
- Talk to your doctor about trying TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation). TENS uses low-voltage electrical currents to relieve pain. A TENS unit is a small device that delivers the current at or near your nerves to block or change your perception of pain. Healthcare professionals use TENS to treat a range of conditions, including osteoarthritis, tendinitis, and fibromyalgia.



Mrs. Thompson's Story

She had been taking cyclobenzaprine, a drug like the one you're taking

"I am 68 years old and took cyclobenzaprine for 4 years. I got a prescription at the hospital after I fell on some ice in the winter. I thought that I would only take the cyclobenzaprine for a few weeks, but no one told me to stop, so I continued for years.

One day, my doctor told me that cyclobenzaprine could be the reason I was so drowsy during the day and suggested that I go off the medication. She reduced my dose slowly until I stopped it. I also started increasing my movement and that helps with my pain. I'm glad my doctor encouraged me to try other options to manage my pain. I feel much more alert and I am happy that I am taking fewer medications."

Alternatives for Muscle Relaxants cont'd.

Improving pain management skills

- Combining different approaches can be helpful in relieving pain by addressing various aspects of the condition. Your doctor can help you coordinate the treatments from multiple therapies.
- Talk to a therapist about a self-management program for pain. A self-management program can help you take control of how you deal with pain.
- Speak to a therapist about cognitive behavioral therapies or mindfulness-based interventions for pain. These therapies change the way you think about pain. This may help your body and mind react better when you experience pain.
- Depending on your diagnosis, physical therapy or massage therapy might help the pain you are experiencing. Some physical activities such as yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates, and other structured exercise programs can help with pain.
- Acupuncture can relieve pain and discomfort from a variety of conditions. Ask your doctor if acupuncture is recommended for your condition.

Resource

Go4Life exercise program. Free videos and an “Exercise & Physical Activity” guide.

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-and-physical-activity>

Tapering-off program

Following a schedule directed by your doctor or pharmacist to slowly lower your muscle relaxant dose, also called tapering, can help reduce the risk of withdrawal symptoms.

Tapering schedules often take longer than five weeks and you may need to use multiple copies of this page for a full taper. A typical tapering schedule for muscle relaxants may take several weeks.

Ask your doctor to complete the chart below for your own tapering schedule:

TAPER SCHEDULE								
Week	Time of day	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Week	Morning							
	Noon							
	Afternoon							
	Evening							
Week	Morning							
	Noon							
	Afternoon							
	Evening							
Week	Morning							
	Noon							
	Afternoon							
	Evening							
Week	Morning							
	Noon							
	Afternoon							
	Evening							
Week	Morning							
	Noon							
	Afternoon							
	Evening							

Please consult your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist before stopping any medication.

