CHLORAL HYDRATE

Read in conjunction with Disclaimer

⚠ HIGH RISK Medication ⚠

Repeat doses should be used with caution as drug and metabolites can accumulate.
An overdose can be rapidly fatal.

Formulary: Highly Restricted Requires neonatologist approval **before** commencing.	
Presentation	**Oral solution:** 1 g/10 mL = **100 mg/mL**
Classification	Sedative
Indication	• Short term sedative. • Sedation during diagnostic procedure.
Special Considerations	• Repeated dosing is not recommended without adequate cardiorespiratory monitoring; drug accumulation and toxicity have occurred. • Not recommended in patients with oesophagitis, gastritis, or gastric or duodenal ulcers. • Contraindicated in severe renal or hepatic impairment. • Contraindicated in severe cardiac disease.
Monitoring	Respiration, oxygen saturation, heart rate, liver function tests, renal function, blood pressure, level of sedation.
Interactions	Chloral hydrate is a CNS depressant; combination with other medications that also have this effect (e.g. opioids, benzodiazepines, barbiturates) will increase the risk of CNS depression.
Adverse Effects	**Common with single dose:** Bradycardia, gastric irritation (particularly if given on an empty stomach), paradoxical excitement.
	Common with repeated doses or acute overdoses: Respiratory depression, myocardial depression, CNS depression, cardiac arrhythmias, hyperbilirubinemia and ileus and bladder atony.
Storage & Stability	**Oral solution:** Store at room temperature, below 25^{o}C. Protect from light.
Comments	• **Onset of action:** Within 30 minutes. • **Duration of action:** Varied data, up to 2 to 8 hours.

ORAL			
	Presentation	**Oral solution:** 1 g/10 mL = **100 mg/mL**	
	Dosage	**Short term sedative:** *Note: Limited data available.* 8 mg/kg/dose every 6 to 8 hours.	
		Sedation during diagnostic procedure: *Note: Limited data available.* 25 to 50 mg/kg as a single dose, given 30 minutes prior to procedure.	
	Dose Adjustment	• Do not use in significant renal or hepatic impairment, more likely to lead to accumulation. • Repeat doses should be used with caution in all patients as drug and metabolites accumulate with repeated use.	
	Preparation	Oral solution should be diluted to at least 1:3 with sterile water or milk/infant formula to mask taste and reduce gastric irritation. *Example:* For a dose of 50 mg (0.5 mL) – add (at least) 1.5 mL water or milk to a final volume of roughly 2 mL.	
	Administration	• Draw prescribed dose into oral/enteral syringe. • Dilute before administration. • Give with or soon after a feed.	

Related Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

HDWA Mandatory Policies:

MP 0131/20: WA High Risk Medication Policy

Pharmaceutical and Medicines Management Guidelines:

CAHS Neonatology – Medication Administration Guideline

High Risk Medicines

References

AusDI. Chloral hydrate mixture. In: AusDI By Medical Director [Internet]. Australia: AusDI by Medical Director; 2020 [cited 2026 Feb 12]. Available from: https://www.ausdi.com/

Australian Medicines Handbook. Chloral hydrate. In: Australian Medicines Handbook [Internet]. Adelaide (South Australia): Australian Medicines Handbook; 2026 [cited 2026 Feb 12]. Available from: https://amhonline.amh.net.au/

Truven Health Analytics. Chloral hydrate. In: NeoFax [Internet]. Greenwood Village (CO): Truven Health Analytics; 2026 [cited 2026 Feb 12]. Available from: https://neofax.micromedexsolutions.com/

UpToDate Lexidrug. Chloral hydrate: Pediatric drug information. In: UpToDate Lexidrug [Internet]. Wolters Kluwer; 2026. [cited 2026 Feb 12]. Available from: https://www.uptodate.com/

Document history

Keywords	Chloral hydrate, sedative, sedation				
Abbreviations	CNS: central nervous system				
Document Owner:	Chief Pharmacist				
Author/ Reviewer	KEMH & PCH Pharmacy/Neonatology Directorate				
Version Info:	V4.0 – full review, new template.				
Date First Issued:	01/2001	Last Reviewed:	13/02/2026	Review Date:	13/02/2031
Endorsed by:	Neonatal Directorate Management Group			Date:	26/05/2026
NSQHS Standards Applicable:	Std 1: Clinical Governance		Std 4: Medication Safety		
Printed or personally saved electronic copies of this document are considered uncontrolled. Access the current version from WNHS HealthPoint.					

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

© North Metropolitan Health Service 2026