**Dihydrocodeine tartrate**

*This analgesic is used to manage moderate to severe pain*

**DRUGS**

**CLINICAL**

### GENERIC/PROPRIETARY NAMES
- Dihydrocodeine tartrate (tablets, oral solution, injection, cough syrup).
- DF118 (tablets).
- DHC Continus (modified-release tablets).
- Also an ingredient in some compound preparations.

### CLASSIFICATION
- Legal: prescription-only medicine (tablets, oral solution); controlled drug (injection).

### ACTION
- Narcotic analgesic acting on opiate receptors in the central nervous system. Inhibits pain pathways, increasing pain threshold and lessening the perception of pain.

### INDICATIONS
- Moderate to severe pain.
- Syrup for suppressing cough in palliative care.

### CONTRAINDICATIONS
- Respiratory depression.
- Head injury.
- Raised intracranial pressure.
- Acute alcoholism.
- Risk of paralytic ileus.

### CAUTIONS
- History of drug misuse.
- Asthma.
- Pregnancy, childbirth, lactation.
- Hypothyroidism.
- Hypotension.
- Renal impairment.
- Liver damage.
- Consider reducing dose for older or debilitated patients.
- Dihydrocodeine is not recommended for children under four years; DF118 and DHC Continus are not recommended for any children.

### SIDE-EFFECTS
- Respiratory depression.
- Cough suppression.
- Exacerbation/precipitation of asthma.
- Drowsiness.
- Hallucinations.
- Altered mood.
- Nausea, vomiting (particularly in early stages).
- Constipation.
- Gastric irritation.
- Anorexia.
- Cramps.
- Dry mouth.
- Hypotension.
- Hypothermia.
- Bradycardia.
- Urinary retention.
- Tolerance, dependence.
- Decreased libido.

### INTERACTIONS
- Risk of hypertensive crisis with monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) or within 21 days of stopping them.
- Increased effects of hypnotics, other central nervous system depressants and alcohol.

### NURSING CONSIDERATIONS
- Assess pain to determine dosage, vital signs, level of consciousness, fluid balance.
- Administer with or after food, with anti-emetic if necessary.
- Provide fibre and fluids if patient becomes constipated.
- Evaluate the need for additional analgesics and the therapeutic response.

### PATIENT TEACHING
- If affected by dizziness or drowsiness, do not drive or operate machinery.
- Take with food.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Explain possible side-effects and potential for dependence.

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Nurses should refer to manufacturer’s summary of product characteristics and to appropriate local guidelines.