Information on CLOZAPINE for Service Users and their Families

This leaflet provides general information about your medication. Manufacturer patient information leaflets are also provided with all medicines. If you require further information, speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Clozapine tablets are known by the brand names of Clozaril®, Denzapine® and Zaponex®. Clozapine is also available as a liquid called Denzapine® Oral Solution.

Clozapine is pronounced:

Cloz - ah - peen

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The Mersey Care Medicines Information Service¹ regularly updates this information sheet.

¹ Medicines Information, Pharmacy, Mossley Hill Hospital, Park Avenue, Liverpool L18 8BU
What is Clozapine for?
Clozapine is part of a group of medications called atypical antipsychotics which are used to treat symptoms such as hearing voices, seeing, feeling or sensing things that are not there, unpleasant thoughts, feeling paranoid, feeling that other people can read your thoughts, being withdrawn or lacking in energy and motivation. It is often tried when other antipsychotics have failed.

How should I take my Clozapine?
Before taking any clozapine, tell your doctor if:
- you are allergic to clozapine or to any excipients (like lactose)
- you suffer from any other conditions, especially heart, blood, liver or kidney problems, fits, glaucoma, prostate and bowel problems
- you have a history of blood clots; constipation, smoking, surgery
- you have diabetes or high blood sugar or low blood pressure
- you take any other medicines including those you have bought yourself, health supplements and herbal remedies
- you are pregnant (or planning pregnancy) or breast-feeding

Your doctor will decide how much clozapine is right for you to take. The dose of clozapine will be increased slowly to reduce side effects. Follow this advice carefully. Clozapine tablets should be swallowed whole with a drink of water. If you or anyone else has taken too much clozapine (overdose), contact a doctor or nearest hospital. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are not sure of anything.

Can I stop taking my medication if I feel better?
Antipsychotic medication tends to be taken long term. You should continue with clozapine as long as your doctor tells you to. Clozapine helps prevent your symptoms from returning so it is best to continue taking it. People who take this type of medication regularly are less likely to deteriorate or have to go into hospital with severe symptoms.

It is better to discuss with your doctor how long you will need to be on medication. If you want to stop your medication, it is better to do it in discussion with your doctor, and slowly so that you can be monitored for any unpleasant withdrawal effects.

What if I forget a dose?
Do not stop taking your clozapine unless your doctor tells you to. If you forget a dose, take the missed dose as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and take the next dose at the usual time. Do not double the dose or take extra doses to make up. If you have not taken your clozapine for more than two days, you must see your doctor, nurse or pharmacist quickly so that you can restart your clozapine safely.
When will Clozapine start to work?
Clozapine does not work straight away. You may notice little improvement in the first few weeks of treatment and it can take several weeks for some of the symptoms to reduce.

Do I need any blood tests?
You will need blood and urine tests before you start taking clozapine. You will also need a blood test every week for the first eighteen weeks of treatment, then a test every two weeks for the rest of that first year. After a year, you may be offered monthly tests. These blood tests are important and your pharmacist is not allowed to give you your tablets unless they have had a blood test result. You need these blood tests to monitor for a very rare, but serious side effect. Clozapine can lower the number of white blood cells in your body making it more difficult for you to fight off dangerous infections. You can look out for and report signs of this side effect yourself, such as flu-like symptoms, fever and sore throat.

Your doctor may also want to monitor your weight, blood pressure and pulse before starting the treatment. You may also get a heart tracing or electrocardiogram (ECG) done. These tests will allow the doctor to check if this medication is right for you and to monitor your treatment.

Are there any side effects?
Clozapine may cause side effects in some people, but they may vary from person to person. Many side effects wear off over time.

Known side effects include:
- tiredness or sleepiness
- lots of saliva and drooling
- excessive sweating
- headache
- shakiness and tremor
- loss of appetite
- low blood pressure
- dry mouth
- flu-like symptoms
- feeling or being sick
- high appetite; weight gain
- restlessness
- feeling dizzy or faint
- constipation or diarrhoea
- abnormal liver tests
- problems with your urine

Occasionally, more serious side effects can occur. These include
- flu-like symptoms (fever, sore throat, infections)
- palpitations and chest pain
- fits
- blurred vision
- breathing problems
- stroke in older people with dementia
- allergic itchy rash, swelling, breathing problems
- odd movements, stiffness or twitches
- high fever, stiffness, sweating, unconsciousness – ‘NMS’
If you are concerned about side effects, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. If you think a medicine has caused you an unwanted side effect, please report the problem either on a Yellow Card form available from your doctor, nurse or pharmacist OR online at this website [http://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/](http://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/).

**Can I take other medicines?**
Other medicines may interact with clozapine causing unwanted effects. Medicines you can buy over the counter without a prescription may interact with prescribed medicines. Always ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicines.

**Can I drive?**
Clozapine can make you drowsy and tired. If you are affected in this way, do not drive or work with machinery, especially during the initial weeks of treatment. You may commit an offence if you drive when your condition or treatment affects your ability to drive safely. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist or contact DVLA if you are not sure.

**Can I drink alcohol?**
Avoid drinking alcohol while taking this medication. The combined effects of clozapine and alcohol can make you feel more drowsy.

**Can I get pregnant or breast feed?**
Medicines can have harmful effects at any time during pregnancy. If you are pregnant, or are planning to get pregnant, you should seek advice from your doctor. Newborns whose mothers were treated with antipsychotics during pregnancy can show unusual movements and withdrawal side effects. You and your doctor or specialist will decide if the potential benefits of treatment outweigh the potential risks to the baby. Clozapine may pass into breast milk. Before you breast-feed, you should get your doctor’s advice.

**What alternative treatments are there?**
Clozapine is an antipsychotic medication. Other medications with similar effects include amisulpride, aripiprazole, olanzapine, quetiapine and risperidone. Other older antipsychotics such as sulpiride, haloperidol, flupentixol and zuclopenthixol can also be used. Your doctor or pharmacist will be able to provide you with further information about these medications.

**IMPORTANT**
Remember to keep medicines where children cannot see or reach them. Never share medicines with others even if their symptoms appear the same as yours.

**NEVER EXCEED THE STATED DOSE OF YOUR MEDICINE**