Information on DONEPEZIL 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.

Donepezil is also known by the brand name, Aricept®. It comes as:

- Oral tablets - Aricept® or donepezil
- Orodispersible tablets (which break up in the mouth) called Aricept® Evess or donepezil orodispersible tablets

Donepezil is pronounced:

Don - ep - eh - zil

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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 Donepezil for?**
Donepezil is a medicine used to treat symptoms of dementia in people with Alzheimer's disease and other similar conditions. Symptoms of dementia commonly include increasing loss of memory, confusion, changes in behaviour, mood and personality, and difficulties in carrying out normal daily and social activities. Donepezil increases brain levels of acetylcholine, a substance involved in brain and memory function. This can help to improve learning of new information, memory and general functioning in dementia. In some people, there is no improvement, but the decline in brain functioning may be slowed down.

**How should I take Donepezil?**
Before taking any donepezil, tell your doctor if:
- you are allergic to donepezil, or any other ingredients
- you have problems with some sugars, like lactose or sucrose
- you have epilepsy, asthma, lung disease, a history of stomach or duodenal ulcers, heart disease, difficulty passing urine, prostate problems or kidney or liver disease
- you are taking antipsychotics or any other prescribed medicines
- you are taking any medicines that you have bought yourself, including any herbal or other complementary medicines.
- you are pregnant (or planning pregnancy) or breast-feeding
- you have recently had or are going to have an operation

Your doctor will decide how much donepezil is right for you to take. Donepezil is usually started at a lower dose and adjusted to a dose that meets your needs. Do not change the dose yourself without your doctor's advice. If you are taking tablets, swallow them whole with a drink of water before going to bed at night. However, donepezil can be taken at any other time agreed by you and the prescriber. You may take donepezil tablets with or without food. Donepezil orodispersible tablets should be placed on the tongue and allowed to break up before swallowing, with or without water. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are not sure of anything.

**Can I stop taking Donepezil if I feel better?**
Your doctor will see you regularly to check that this medicine is working for you and to discuss how you are feeling. Your doctor will advise you about how long you should carry on taking donepezil. Do not stop taking the tablets unless told to do so by your doctor. If you stop taking donepezil, the benefits of your treatment will gradually fade away and your symptoms may return.
What if I forget a dose of Donepezil?
If you forget the tablets, take the missed dose as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the forgotten dose completely and take the next dose at the usual time then continue your course as before. Do not double the dose or take extra doses to make up. If you forget to take your medicine for more than a week, call your doctor before taking any more medicine. Your carer may be able to help you to take your medicine as prescribed. If you or anyone else has taken more donepezil than prescribed or an overdose, contact a doctor or the nearest hospital.

When will Donepezil start to work?
Donepezil does not work straight away. It may take several days or even weeks for benefits to show. Memory and other brain functions may slowly improve over several weeks. In some people, symptoms may not improve but progress of the disease may be slowed down.

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

- stomach problems (feeling or being sick, pain, diarrhoea)
- tiredness
- headaches
- dizziness
- poor appetite, weight loss
- sleep problems, unusual dreams, nightmares
- muscle cramps
- runny or blocked nose
- problems passing urine
- agitation, aggression

You must tell your doctor immediately if you notice any of these serious side effects, which may need urgent medical attention.

- seeing, feeling or hearing things that are not there
- slow heart beat and fainting
- liver problems - feeling or being sick, loss of appetite, itching, yellow skin and eyes and dark urine
- stomach pain and indigestion and signs of ulcers or bleeding
- seizures (fits)
- fever, muscle stiffness, sweating, low consciousness - NMS
- muscle weakness, pain with fever, feeling unwell or dark urine

You should also tell your doctor if you notice any other side effects not listed in this leaflet. 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/.
**Can I take other medicines?**
Other medicines may interact with donepezil causing unwanted effects. You should always tell the doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you are taking or have recently taken, or are going to be taking any other medicines, including those bought without prescription. If you having an operation tell your doctor and anaesthetist that you are taking donepezil.

**Can I drive?**
Donepezil can cause tiredness, dizziness, drowsiness, confusion and muscle cramps. If you are affected in this way, you must not drive until your doctor tells you that it is safe to do so. Dementia can affect your fitness to drive. By law, you may commit an offence if you drive and your condition or treatment affects your ability to drive safely. Talk to your doctor or contact the DVLA if you are not sure.

**Can I drink alcohol?**
Avoid drinking alcohol while taking this medication. Alcohol can worsen the symptoms of dementia.

**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 or specialist. You and your doctor or specialist will decide if the potential benefits of treatment outweigh the potential risks to the baby. Donepezil should not be used while breastfeeding. If you are breast feeding, you should get your doctor’s advice.

**What alternative treatments are there?**
Donepezil is used to manage symptoms of dementia in people with Alzheimer’s disease and other similar conditions. Other medicines for dementia are galantamine, rivastigmine and memantine. Your doctor or pharmacist will be able to provide you with further information about these medications. In addition to medication, non-drug measures such as psychological and other complementary and alternative therapies can sometimes help.

**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 MEDICATION**