

What else should I know about when taking clozapine?

You should arrange to see your doctor at least every six months to monitor your general physical health.

You should avoid drinking alcohol (wine, beer, and spirits including cocktails) when taking clozapine. Clozapine can increase the effects of alcohol and affect your ability to think clearly. Combining alcohol and clozapine can make you very sleepy.

Cigarette smoking can affect the levels of clozapine in your body. You should talk to your doctor if you smoke cigarettes. It is important that your doctor knows of any change to the amount of cigarettes that you smoke.

You should also avoid taking any other drugs (for example, cannabis, amphetamines, or injecting drugs) when you are taking clozapine. Other drugs can make your symptoms worse.

You need to talk to your doctor if you are planning on having a baby. If you are already pregnant, you need to contact your doctor immediately. You must also tell your doctor if you are breastfeeding when you take clozapine.

Do not share your clozapine with anyone else. Your medicine has been prescribed for your symptoms and to suit your medical history. Clozapine may be harmful to someone else. If someone you know seems to have similar symptoms to you, encourage them to visit the doctor.

What if I need help to speak in English?

Ask for an interpreter if you have difficulty communicating with your doctor or pharmacist. A professional interpreter should be used rather than a family member or friend. They are trained in understanding medical terms and are required to keep information confidential.

Your doctor or pharmacist can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450. This service is free and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This brochure contains general information and does not include all possible side effects or all brand names of medications.

What is clozapine?

Clozapine is a medicine used to treat some kinds of mental illness. Clozapine can be called Clozaril, Clopine or Closyn.

Clozapine is prescribed by doctors to people who have a psychotic illness, and is therefore known as an antipsychotic medicine.

There are different types of antipsychotic medicines. Clozapine is a newer antipsychotic medicine.

What are psychotic illnesses?

Psychotic illnesses are a type of mental illness. Psychotic illnesses can affect how people think, feel and behave. People with psychotic illnesses may have problems with identifying what is really happening and what is not really happening. One kind of psychotic illness is schizophrenia.

People with psychotic illnesses may experience the following symptoms:

- **Hallucinations:** A person who has hallucinations sees, hears, feels, smells or tastes something that is not actually there. An example of a hallucination is hearing voices that no one else can hear.
- **Delusions:** A person who is experiencing delusions has beliefs that are not true. For example, the person may believe that someone else is reading their thoughts.
- **Disorganised thoughts:** A person with disorganised thoughts may not be able to think clearly.

Clozapine can be a very effective medicine to control the symptoms of psychotic illness.

What does my doctor need to know to prescribe me clozapine?

Tell your doctor as much information as possible about your symptoms and medical history, and how much you smoke and drink alcohol, and whether you take any illicit drugs. It is important that your doctor knows about any illnesses that you have or have had in the past, such as cardiovascular disease, or any medicines that you are taking.

When you first start taking clozapine you will be required to have weekly blood tests. After you have been taking the medicine for about 18 weeks, the blood tests will generally be required every month. The blood tests are needed to see if you are having a reaction to clozapine that could lead to other medical problems.

You will also be required to get an ultrasound of your heart before starting clozapine. An ultrasound is a test that takes a picture of your heart using sound waves. The ultrasound will allow your doctor to check the health of your heart. After you take clozapine for six months, you will get another ultrasound of your heart.

These tests are important for your doctor to check how your body is reacting to the medicine. Your doctor will arrange more tests if necessary while you are taking clozapine. You should talk to your doctor if you have any questions about these tests.

How do I take clozapine?

Clozapine is a tablet. Your doctor will tell you the amount or dose to take and when to take the medicine.

It is important to take clozapine every day, even if you are feeling well. You must not change the amount of clozapine that you take or stop taking clozapine unless you have been told to do so by your doctor.

What happens if I forget to take my clozapine?

You should try to take clozapine at the same time every day. If you forget to take your clozapine you should take it only if you remember close to your usual time.

If you do not remember to take clozapine within a few hours of your usual time, wait until your next dose is due and take only the normal amount or dose. Do not try to catch up by doubling the amount of clozapine.

If you forget to take clozapine for more than two days, you need to speak to your doctor immediately. Do not take any clozapine until you have spoken to your doctor.

How long does clozapine take to work?

Clozapine does not have an immediate effect. You need to talk to your doctor about how long it will take before clozapine should start to work for you.

Can I take other medicines with clozapine?

Clozapine can affect the way other medicines work. You must tell your doctor about any other medicines that you take. Other medicines include any medicines prescribed by any doctor as well as any medicines that you have purchased without a prescription.

You must also tell your doctor about any herbal or traditional medicines that you take.

What side effects can I experience when taking clozapine?

A side effect is an unwanted reaction to taking a medicine. Most medicines have side effects, although the severity of side effects will vary between different people.

It is important to know the possible side effects of clozapine so you can talk to your doctor if you think you are experiencing a side effect. You should always talk to your doctor if feel unwell or you are concerned about any side effects of taking clozapine. Your doctor can tell you more information about managing side effects of your medicine.

Possible side effects and ways to manage them are shown below: ***Please talk to your doctor if you experience any of these side effects***

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS	WHAT TO DO
Feeling sleepy	Your doctor may recommend taking most of your medicine at night. You may also be advised not to drive or operate machinery.
Weight gain	Maintain a healthy diet and avoid foods that are high in fat or sugar. Try not to have snacks between meals. Regular exercise is an important part of your daily routine particularly when you are on clozapine.
High temperature, sore throat, mouth ulcers, and other symptoms similar to influenza	See your doctor as soon as possible if you experience any of these symptoms.
Fast heart beat while resting	Talk to your doctor.
Feeling out of breath or chest pain	Talk to your doctor immediately.
Dizziness	Take care when standing up. For example, if you are lying down and wish to stand up, make sure that you first move to a sitting position for several minutes before attempting to stand. Talk to your doctor if the problem continues.
Urinating during sleep	The doctor may recommend that you limit the amount of liquid that you drink in the evening before going to bed.
Increased amount of saliva	Try to sleep on your side at night. There are other medicines that your doctor could prescribe for this.
Constipation (difficulty emptying the bowels due to hard faeces)	Make sure that your diet includes lots of fibre by eating wholegrain breads and cereals, fruit and vegetables. Drink plenty of water and exercise regularly. It is important to talk to your doctor if this continues.
Nausea (feeling sick)	Nausea can occur when you first start taking clozapine. There are medicines that your doctor could prescribe for this.

Adapted from Prof D. Castle and N. Tran: Psychiatric Medication Information, St. Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, February 2008.

If you experience any other side effects not in the table, discuss them with your doctor.

Keep a record of your symptoms and any side effects from your medicine. Take these notes when you visit your doctor and ask questions if you need more information about how clozapine is working for you.

The Medimate brochure, which is available in a number of languages, can help you understand and use clozapine, or other medicines, in partnership with your doctor. This brochure and other useful information are available at the National Prescribing Service Medicinewise (NPS) website: <http://www.nps.org.au/translated-health-information-about-medicines>.