CLOZAPINE also known as Clozaril®
Guidelines for Carers and Support Persons

Clozapine is a highly specialised and effective antipsychotic medication that needs compulsory blood testing and health check-ups by clozapine registered doctors and nurses. It’s important to have a regular routine for appointments and to book in advance.

Compulsory blood test called a Complete Blood Examination (CBE)
Why? In rare cases clozapine has been known to lower the number of blood cells
When? Early in the week preferably before the doctor appointment
How often? Weekly or every 4 weeks depending on the stage of treatment
Where? SA Pathology is the preferred public blood collection centre as results are readily available for the doctor and the Clozapine Coordinator. The specimen is collected in a purple top container and it is bulk billed with no cost. Checking the right container is used helps to prevent mistakes.

Doctor or clinic appointment within 48 hours of the blood test:
The consumer attends an appointment with the clozapine registered doctor or Clozapine Coordinator for a physical and mental health assessment. Side effects are monitored; in particular signs of infection, any heart problems, constipation and sedation/tiredness (see over the page for a full list and more information). The clozapine questionnaire can be useful and it is worth telling the doctor how many tablets are left at home to prevent over supply.

The doctor carefully checks the blood test; especially the White Cell Count (WCC) & Neutrophil Count (NC) before writing a prescription.

Green A green result is classified as normal
Amber If amber, the blood test is repeated twice a week until it returns to green
Red If the result is red, clozapine is stopped and the cause investigated

The blood result is recorded on the Clozaril Patient Monitoring Service (CPMS) which helps to track the treatment and pick up abnormal results.
The doctor writes an Authority prescription and adds extra information so the pharmacist can be sure the consumer is ok to keep taking the clozapine: Clozaril® Patient Number (CPN) to assist the pharmacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood test date and results</th>
<th>hospital code of the psychiatrist (if on weekly treatment)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a treatment code and the exact quantity of tablets to last until the next blood test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The doctor will provide a pathology form for the next test and may add some extra tests that are all free of charge:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6 monthly as well as CBE</th>
<th>12 monthly as well as CBE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clozapine level</td>
<td>Echocardiogram (ECHO) – shows a picture of the heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fasting glucose</td>
<td>Electrocardiogram (ECG) – shows the electrical function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fasting lipids/cholesterol</td>
<td>Troponin bloods test to check for heart problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrolytes</td>
<td>*In most cases ECHOs and if needed cardiology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatrist review/ check-up</td>
<td>specialist appointments can be bulk billed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CLOZAPINE LEVELS are done 3-6 monthly or more frequently in the cases below:

*The morning dose should NOT be before the blood test (it can be taken afterwards)

- Changing the dose or if doses are missed
- Unexplained changes in mental or physical state
- SMOKING: Starting or stopping smoking can significantly change clozapine levels. It’s best to plan ahead as extra tests need to be arranged as soon as possible
- CAFFEINE: Can increase clozapine levels. *This includes, energy drinks
- OTHER MEDICINES & substances: Can change how clozapine works and should be discussed with the doctor and pharmacist
Pharmacy:
Standard government co-payments apply for PBS clozapine prescriptions unless other arrangements have been made or the person is registered with Close the Gap. Any problems with the prescription should be directed back to the doctor. Any problems with blister packs must be fixed by the pharmacy and reported to the mental health service involved.
* It is important to keep everyone informed regarding medication changes so that the right doses are packed and clear to all involved.

Support:
The support worker or carer’s role with permission of the consumer is discussed and included in the care plan.

SIDE EFFECTS:
- Weight gain in some cases can lead to diabetes
- Increased saliva (dribbling) – more often at night. Some people put a towel on their pillow
- Nausea
- Sedation and sleepiness; the main dose is usually taken shortly before bedtime
- Constipation can become severe if not managed
- Infections can occur if there are changes in the blood cells or poor health
- Increased heart rate
- Jerking movements in the hands
- Sometimes obsessional behaviours can be more noticeable

SERIOUS / ADVERSE EFFECTS: (are a MEDICAL EMERGENCY and should be dealt with URGENTLY)
- Seizures: can occur if clozapine blood levels increase dramatically
- Chest pain, increased pulse rate, pale and sweating: call an ambulance
  - Myocarditis: inflammation of heart muscle is more common in the start-up phase and must be treated immediately
  - Cardiomyopathy: a weakening of the heart that can occur over time
- Infection, fever: the cause must be found in case it is serious
  - Neutropenia: a low blood count that can cause severe infection
  - Agranulocytosis: a low blood count that can lead to infection

WHEN TO LIAISE with the Clozapine Coordinator, treating doctor, GP, ETLS, Ambulance or hospital emergency department:
- Concerns if the consumer is not taking doses as prescribed
- Refusal to take clozapine and interruptions or gaps in treatment MUST BE REPORTED to the mental health service to avoid health problems and must not be restarted without medical advice. Clozapine needs to be restarted at 12.5mg
- Fever, rigors, temperature greater than 38° due to possible infection (please ask for the “Clozapine Consumer Temperature Information” pamphlet
- Noticeable changes in mental state
- Change to smoking habits or caffeine intake
- Queries about when the blood test is due
- Queries regarding next doctor or clinic appointment
- Pharmacy arrangements and dose enquiries
- If the consumer has been sent to an emergency centre or admitted to hospital for physical or mental health problems

Support and Clozapine Contacts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Type</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Triage Liaison Service (ETLS)</td>
<td></td>
<td>13 14 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Triage (MHT)</td>
<td></td>
<td>after hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clozapine Coordinator:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local coordination</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clozapine Clinical Coordinator: Grace Macdonald</td>
<td></td>
<td>7087 1643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinates Service</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clozaril Patient Monitoring System (CPMS)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1800 501 768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly for clinicians</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mon-Fri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIFSA CARER’S SUPPORT</td>
<td></td>
<td>(08) 8378 4100</td>
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</tbody>
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