

The Big Issue – Side Effects

It is important to discuss side effects at each visit with your doctor and/or Clozapine Coordinator nurse so that they can be addressed straight away. Some of the side effects may decrease over time and others can be managed. If you experience any changes in side effects or your physical health perhaps make a note of these changes by writing them down. That way if they worry you, you can tell your doctor or nurse.

Some common side effects include:

- Tiredness, drowsiness
- Dizziness or light headedness when standing up
- Fast heart rate
- Increase in saliva or dribbling (mostly at night)
- Constipation
- Weight gain

RARE but very important side effects

If these occur seek urgent medical care.

- Fever, sore throat, mouth ulcers or “flu-like” symptoms can be an effect of blood conditions (agranulocytosis or neutropenia)
- Seizures (fits) if blood levels go too high
- Problems controlling or passing urine
- Confusion, muscle stiffness, unsteadiness and collapse
- Severe constipation or diarrhoea if left untreated can lead to bowel blockage
- Chest pain, racing heart beat or shortness of breath

Ask your Clozapine Coordinator about the wallet size **Clozapine Care card**. In emergency situations this can be shown to any hospital staff that may not know you or understand clozapine.

QUESTIONS ABOUT CLOZAPINE?

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

This is not intended to replace the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) for clozapine. Please speak to your pharmacist to get a copy of the CMI and any further information that you require.

Extra fact sheets on clozapine and managing side effects are available through your Clozapine Coordinator and SA Health

sahealth.sa.gov.au/clozapine

Interpreting and Translating Centre
1800 280 203

Emergency contact after hours
13 14 65

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Clozapine Information



Medication can play a significant role in your recovery and wellbeing

What do I need to know about taking clozapine?

Clozapine (brand names Clozaril® or Clopine®) is a medication that can help treat symptoms of schizophrenia when other medications haven't worked.

Why do I need blood tests?

Blood tests are necessary because in rare cases clozapine has been known to lower the number of white blood cells which are important in fighting infection. They are also done to check your physical health.

<p>When starting clozapine for the first time blood testing is done weekly for the first 18 weeks.</p> <p>You will also need to check and record your temperature every day for the first 28 days on the temperature monitoring sheet.</p>	
Every 28 days	<p>A Complete Blood Examination (CBE) is collected in a purple top container. ●</p> <p>Usually on a Monday or Tuesday</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Within 48 hours of the blood test</p> <p>Attend a regular appointment with your doctor or nurse who will check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The blood test result Your wellbeing and ask about any side effects Blood pressure Temperature and pulse Weight and waist measurement Arrangements for the next prescription You have a blood form
At least every 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clozapine level blood test is done 12 hours after the last dose. Medication can then be taken after the blood test. Diabetes and cholesterol blood tests must be done after you have fasted for at least 8 hours from food and fluid (water is OK). Liver and kidney blood tests Psychiatric specialist review
Every 12 months	<p>Heart check-up</p> <p>In rare cases clozapine can affect the heart. These tests can help to pick up problems early:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrocardiogram (ECG) Echocardiogram (ECHO)

Decisions regarding your clozapine dose will be made with you and your psychiatrist to individualise a medication regimen to suit your lifestyle. Please ask questions and if required take a support person with you to the appointment.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The factors below can affect your clozapine and need to be discussed with your doctor or nurse as the dose may need to be changed.

Starting, stopping or cutting down cigarette and cannabis smoking can significantly change clozapine levels and side effects. You will need to work with your doctor or nurse to safely make the changes you want.

Changing caffeine consumption (coffee, tea, cola, energy and diet drinks) can alter clozapine levels.

Alcohol and Illicit Drugs can make you feel excessively tired and have poor concentration and are not good for your physical health.

Other prescribed and over the counter medicines need to be discussed with your doctor and pharmacist.

If you miss a dose don't panic, make sure you take your next dose as prescribed. Don't ever take a double dose. If you are worried, contact your doctor or nurse for advice. After hours call 13 14 65.

If you have forgotten to take clozapine for more than two days, do not start taking it again before you contact your doctor.

If you feel unwell check your temperature and seek medical care.

Take clozapine as prescribed including when travelling, as changing the dose or times may result in increased side effects or the medication being less effective.

Clozapine should be stored in a safe, dry place, at room temperature, away from direct sunlight and out of the reach of children.

Taking care of your health

It is important to maintain your health by:

- Eating a healthy varied diet
- Drinking plenty of water
- Have good routines for wellbeing and self-care
- Cleaning your teeth morning and night
- Regularly exercising and
- Reducing or quitting smoking. Plan this with your doctor.

Your support team

Your opinion counts, as do those of people that support and care for you. It is important for you:

- to understand why you are being prescribed clozapine and to be actively involved in your recovery.
- to have a **regular GP** who can work with you on your health care plan.
- if needed be referred to a dietician, psychologist, physiotherapist or podiatrist.

Shared Care Your GP can be registered to prescribe clozapine and work with your psychiatrist, pharmacist and Clozapine Coordinator.

"It's easier and more convenient for me to see my local doctor."

"It gives me the opportunity to choose who provides my health care."

"It promotes holistic/complete care."

At least **every six months your psychiatrist** will review the medication and treatment plan with you and let your GP know if anything needs to change.

Your **Clozapine Coordinator nurse and /or GP** will work closely with you to:

- Keep up with a treatment routine and a plan for taking the clozapine at a regular time each day
- Coordinate blood tests and appointments
- Check your physical and mental health
- Provide prescriptions
- Arrange extra tablets if you are planning a holiday or travelling overseas