

### What if I forget a dose?

Take it as soon as you remember, unless it is only a few hours until your next dose. In that case, just take your next dose as prescribed. Do not take extra doses to catch up; it can cause problems with side effects.

If you miss doses for more than 48 hours (two days) in a row, you must restart your clozapine slowly.

This is because your body will have started to adjust to the clozapine not being there. Starting back on your old dose could make you unwell. Talk to your doctor or nurse as soon as possible.

### What if I want to stop clozapine?

Unless you have a serious reaction to clozapine and your doctor tells you to stop, we advise you not to stop clozapine suddenly. It can cause serious problems for your physical and mental health.

Clozapine should usually be reduced slowly over weeks or months. Talk to your mental health team about your reasons for wanting to stop and what other options there are.

### Where can I find out more?

Talk to your mental health team. Let them know if you would like to talk to a mental health pharmacist.

Ask to read the manufacturer's patient information leaflet (PIL).

See [www.choiceandmedication.org/awp](http://www.choiceandmedication.org/awp)

### Contact us

This information has been written by the specialist mental health pharmacists who work for the Trust.

If you would like to contact us, ask your ward or team to put you in touch with the pharmacist in your area.

For information about Trust services visit [www.awp.nhs.uk](http://www.awp.nhs.uk)

### PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel: 01249 468261  
Freephone: 0800 073 1778  
Email: [awp.pals@nhs.net](mailto:awp.pals@nhs.net)

### Other formats and languages

If you need this information in other formats (such as large print, audio, Braille) or in another language, please call the PALS number.

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## About the antipsychotic medicine clozapine

This is not the manufacturer's patient information leaflet. It does not include all the available information about clozapine.

Please ask your mental health team if you have further questions.

**You matter, we care**

### What is clozapine?

Clozapine is an antipsychotic medicine. It is used to treat the symptoms of schizophrenia or psychosis in people who have tried at least two other antipsychotic medicines which have not suited them. It may also be used to treat psychosis in Parkinson's disease.

### How does clozapine work?

The brain sends messages using naturally occurring chemicals. Sometimes some of the chemicals become overactive (although we don't know exactly why). Clozapine blocks some of the over activity to help the brain return to a calmer state.

### Why is it being offered to me?

Clozapine has been shown to be effective for symptoms of schizophrenia or psychosis even when other medicines have not worked.

### How is it given?

Clozapine is usually given as tablets taken once or twice a day. There is a liquid for people who have swallowing problems.

### Who prescribes it?

At the moment in AWP, clozapine can only be prescribed by our mental health specialists. It cannot be prescribed by your GP and is almost always dispensed by the AWP pharmacy.

### What about side effects?

Some of the side effects are common, some are very unusual. Some people have very few side effects, others find them more troublesome. We monitor people carefully

for side effects and there are often things that can be done to reduce the problems.

### Common side effects include:

- drowsiness
- weight gain
- constipation
- having too much saliva
- low blood pressure.

Sometime people are embarrassed to mention constipation, but it is very important that this side effect is taken seriously; it can become so severe that it causes a lot of damage to the gut. There is a helpful fact sheet about clozapine and constipation on the Choice and Medication website:

[www.choiceandmedication.org/awp](http://www.choiceandmedication.org/awp)

### Rare side effects include:

- low numbers of white cells in the blood (increasing the risk of infections)
- seizures
- diabetes
- increased cholesterol
- heart problems.

### Will I need any special monitoring?

Very rarely, clozapine can lower the number of white cells in the blood. These are the cells that fight infection. Because of this, people taking clozapine have to have regular blood tests. These will be once a week for the first 18 weeks of treatment. The tests become less frequent if they remain normal.

A sore throat or high temperature could be a sign that your white cells are low. Contact your team for an extra blood test. It is very important to have your blood tests as the pharmacy cannot dispense clozapine unless your blood test is up-to-date.

### How long will it take to work?

Some effects of clozapine begin soon after starting, for example feeling calmer (but also feeling more tired). However, you may not see the full benefit for several months or even up to a year.

### Can I drink alcohol?

Clozapine and alcohol together can make you feel very drowsy. It is safest to avoid alcoholic drinks, especially when you first start clozapine. However, once you have been taking clozapine for a while and your body is used to it, you may find a small amount to drink occasionally is okay.

### Can I smoke cigarettes?

If you smoke, your body gets rid of clozapine more quickly, so you might need a higher dose than someone who doesn't smoke.

If you stop smoking while on clozapine, the levels of the medicine in your body can rise rapidly.

Please let your team know if you are planning to give up or reduce the amount you smoke (even if you are using nicotine replacement therapy). Your clozapine dose will probably need reducing to stop you getting troublesome side effects.