

## 1. Donepezil, Galantamine and Rivastigmine

These are drugs used in Alzheimer's dementia, Lewy body dementia and Parkinson's dementia. They are available in different presentations such as tablets, capsules, skin patches or liquids so that the doctor may choose different ones depending on the individual needs of each patient. They all start at a lower dose and increase over a couple of months to the standard dose. In general side effects are similar but their effect can vary markedly from person to person. They can include nausea, being sick, experiencing diarrhoea, dizziness and sleep disturbances.

If side effects are severe or do not settle down after a few days please contact us by phone on 0117 3784670 for further advice.

An information sheet will be available about each drug if we are prescribing it, so please ask if you have not had one. If our doctors provide the initial prescription we will follow this up with a review at home by one of the Memory Nurses to see if the drug chosen has been helpful after about eleven weeks of treatment. If treatment is helpful at this time then your GP will take over the prescribing and management of this.

If the GP has started the treatment then they are responsible for following up whether it has improved the condition. Sometimes they ask us to do this for them.

## 2. Memantine

This drug is not routinely used in the early stages of dementia. It changes the level of a chemical called glutamate which is produced in larger quantities than usual by dying brain cells and affects other cells close by, making them work less well too. By altering the glutamate production we can often influence behaviour in people with dementia so Memantine is used usually when there are symptoms suggesting distress such as agitation and aggression. In this situation a more general physical check for underlying problems such as infections or pain needs to happen first. Usually this treatment is started by Memory Services, Mental Health teams and hospital teams rather than by GPs.

Memantine starts with a low dose of 5mgs and increases over four weeks to 20mgs. If it hasn't had a positive effect by six weeks this is unlikely to happen and it should be reviewed.

If it is helpful then many GPs will provide it in the future but for some the prescription may need to come from Mental Health services such as the Memory Service.

Memantine is sometimes used as an alternative to Donepezil, Galantamine or Rivastigmine if for some medical reason these drugs are not appropriate.