

# Clozapine

**Pronunciation:** CLAW za peen  
**Brand:** Clozaril

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## What is the most important information I should know about clozapine?

- Call your doctor immediately if you experience unusual tiredness, weakness, fever, sore throat, sores in the mouth, or if you feel ill or as if you have the flu. These symptoms could be early signs of decreased white blood cell levels. A serious side effect from clozapine therapy is a decrease in white blood cells, which could lead to a life-threatening infection. You will need regular blood tests to monitor white blood cell levels during treatment.
- Seizures have been reported with the use of clozapine, especially when used at higher doses. Contact your doctor immediately if a seizure occurs.
- Serious and/or life-threatening cases of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) has been reported as a rare side effect of treatment with clozapine. Contact your doctor immediately if you experience unexplained fatigue, shortness of breath, increased rate of breathing, fever, chest pain, irregular heartbeats, or unusual swelling or water retention.
- Dizziness and/or fainting may occur, especially when rising from sitting or lying down. Contact your doctor immediately if dizziness is severe or if fainting occurs. Rise slowly to minimize dizziness and a possible fall.



- Avoid driving, operating machinery, or performing other hazardous activities during treatment with clozapine. Clozapine may cause seizures, dizziness, or fainting.

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## What is clozapine?

- Clozapine is an antipsychotic medication. It works by changing the actions of chemicals in the brain.
- Clozapine is used to treat the symptoms of schizophrenia including hallucinations, delusions, and confusion. Because clozapine may cause serious side effects, treatment is usually reserved for people who have not responded to other medications.
- Clozapine may also be used for purposes other than those listed in this medication guide.

## What should I discuss with my healthcare provider before taking clozapine?



- Do not take clozapine without first talking to your doctor if you have
  - blood problems;
  - seizures or epilepsy;
  - liver disease or other liver problems;
  - kidney disease;
  - heart disease or other heart problems such as high blood pressure, a previous heart attack, irregular heartbeats, or other conditions;
  - an enlarged prostate or difficulty urinating; or
  - narrow angle glaucoma.

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- You may not be able to take clozapine, or you may require a dosage adjustment or special monitoring during treatment if you have any of the conditions listed above.



- Clozapine is in the FDA pregnancy B. This means that it is not expected to be harmful to an unborn baby. Do not take clozapine without first talking to your doctor if you are pregnant or could become pregnant during treatment.



- Clozapine passes into breast milk. It is not known whether clozapine will affect a nursing baby. Do not take clozapine without first talking to your doctor if you are breast-feeding a baby.

## How should I take clozapine?

- Take clozapine exactly as directed by your doctor. If you do not understand these directions, ask your pharmacist, nurse, or doctor to explain them to you.



- Take each dose with a full glass of water.
- Clozapine can be taken with or without food.
- Blood tests will be required on a regular basis, usually weekly or every other week, to monitor white blood cell levels. Clozapine is only available through a special program designed to ensure the required blood monitoring is performed.
- If treatment with clozapine is stopped for more than 2 days, do not restart the medication at the same dosage. Contact your doctor for instructions regarding restarting the medication. A lower dose may be required.

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- Do not stop taking clozapine without first talking to your doctor. Although symptoms may improve, treatment with clozapine may still be necessary.



- Store clozapine at room temperature away from moisture and heat.

## What happens if I miss a dose?

- Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for the next regularly scheduled dose, skip the missed dose and take the next one as directed. **Do not** take a double dose of this medication.

## What happens if I overdose?



- Seek emergency medical attention.
- Symptoms of a clozapine overdose include drowsiness, delirium, unconsciousness, fast heart rate, dizziness, difficulty breathing, seizures, coma, and death.

## What should I avoid while taking clozapine?

- Dizziness and/or fainting may occur, especially when rising from sitting or lying down. Contact your doctor immediately if dizziness is severe or if fainting occurs. Rise slowly to minimize dizziness and a possible fall.



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- Avoid driving, operating machinery, or performing other hazardous activities during treatment with clozapine. Clozapine may cause seizures, dizziness, or fainting.



- Avoid alcohol while taking clozapine.



- Do not take other prescription or over-the-counter medicines, including herbal products during treatment with clozapine without first talking to your doctor.

## What are the possible side effects of clozapine?

- Call your doctor immediately if you experience unusual tiredness, weakness, fever, sore throat, sores in the mouth, or if you feel ill or as if you have the flu. These symptoms could be early signs of decreased white blood cell levels. A serious side effect from clozapine therapy is a decrease in white blood cells, which could lead to a life-threatening infection. You will need regular blood tests to monitor white blood cell levels during treatment.
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- Stop taking clozapine and seek emergency medical attention if you experience any of the following other serious side effects:
  - an allergic reaction (difficulty breathing; closing of the throat; swelling of the lips, tongue, or face; or hives);
  - muscle stiffness;
  - uncontrollable movements of the mouth, tongue, jaw, face, arms, or legs;
  - fever;
  - an irregular or fast heartbeat;
  - fluttering in the chest;
  - chest pain or shortness of breath; or
  - liver problems.
- Other, less serious side effects may be more likely to occur. Continue to take clozapine and talk to your doctor if you experience
  - dizziness or drowsiness,
  - nausea or upset stomach,
  - constipation,
  - salivation (watering mouth),
  - restlessness or agitation,

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-increased thirst or urination (may indicate increased blood sugar levels);

-increased dreaming or nightmares.

- Side effects other than those listed here may also occur. Talk to your doctor about any side effect that seems unusual or that is especially bothersome.

## **What other drugs will affect clozapine?**

- Clozapine may increase the side effects of other drugs that affect the central nervous system, including antidepressants, alcohol, antihistamines, sedatives (medicines that treat insomnia), pain relievers, anxiety medicines, muscle relaxants, and any others. Tell your doctor about all medicines that you are taking and do not take any medicine without first talking to your doctor.

- Many drugs other than those listed here may also interact with clozapine possibly resulting in decreased effectiveness of the medication or dangerous side effects. Talk to your doctor and pharmacist before taking any prescription or over-the-counter medicines, including herbal products, during treatment with clozapine.

## **Where can I get more information?**

- Your pharmacist has more information about clozapine written for health professionals that you may read.

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