

Hydroxychloroquine

Rheumatology Department Patient Information Leaflet

Please keep this information in a safe place

Introduction

Hydroxychloroquine is in a family of drugs called disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs). Whilst your specialist will suggest the drug they feel is best to treat you at the time, based on research and extensive knowledge of the drug, you will always have the choice to discuss other treatment options and alternative therapies.

What is hydroxychloroquine?

Hydroxychloroquine is used to treat rheumatoid arthritis and some other conditions such as systemic lupus erythematosus. It helps to slow down the progression of the arthritis by reducing inflammation which can reduce pain, swelling and joint stiffness.

It is in the same family of drugs that are used to treat malaria; however, if you are travelling to an area where there is a high risk of getting malaria, you will need to ask your GP's advice about protection.

How should I take hydroxychloroquine?

Take hydroxychloroquine tablets with or just after a meal. They are usually taken once or twice a day for five days of the week. It is easiest to remember this by taking them on weekdays and not taking them on Saturdays and Sundays. This helps to reduce the risks of side effects. Take only the dose that has been prescribed for you.

How long will it take to work?

It can take up to three months before you feel the full benefit of the treatment. You will be given your first prescription from the hospital. Further prescriptions should be obtained from your GP.

Will I have any side effects?

Most people have no side effects. Some patients feel nauseous (feel sick), get diarrhoea, indigestion or occasional headaches. Rarely, hydroxychloroquine can affect the retina (the back of the eye) which would affect your ability to see small print clearly.

Another rare side effect of hydroxychloroquine is tinnitus (ringing in the ears). If you have any of these side effects, you should consult your specialist or call the rheumatology helpline.

Do I need any special tests?

You do not need to have special blood tests to monitor for side effects but we will usually ask you to have blood test before you come for your hospital appointment to check whether your arthritis is active.

It is your responsibility to have these blood tests and it is important that you do not miss any of them. In order for us to receive the results from your blood tests, you will have to have them at any of the following centres:

Russells Hall Hospital: Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 7.30pm (excluding 12noon to 5pm on Tuesday and 8am to 12noon on Friday) or Saturday, 8am to 10am. No appointments required.

Corbett Hospital: Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.
No appointments required.

Netherton Health Centre: Appointment required, ring 01384 366500.

Cross Street Health Centre: Appointment required, ring 01384 366257.

Ladies Walk Clinic: Appointment required, ring 01902 575103.

In addition, you will be asked to read from a special card to check your vision once a year. If you notice any changes in your eyesight, it is best to visit your optician for a check-up.

Can I take my other medication?

Hydroxychloroquine is not a painkiller so you may need to continue with your usual painkillers, if necessary. If you get indigestion, you can take antacids (indigestion remedies) but try to leave four hours between taking the remedy and taking hydroxychloroquine.

Tell any doctor who is prescribing medication for you, or the pharmacist if you are buying over-the-counter medicines, that you take hydroxychloroquine.

Can I drink alcohol while on hydroxychloroquine?

You can drink alcohol but we recommend that you stay within government guidelines (two to three units a day for women and three to four a day for men).

Does hydroxychloroquine affect pregnancy?

It is best not to take hydroxychloroquine during pregnancy or breastfeeding. If you are planning a pregnancy or find that you are pregnant, discuss this with your consultant.

What alternatives are there to this treatment?

You do not have to take this treatment and can always discuss alternatives with the Rheumatology Department. Some people find that complementary therapy treatment is useful and leaflets about this, provided by Arthritis Research Council, are available in our clinics.

Over-the-counter medications may be used alone or in combination with prescribed medication you are taking; however, you are always advised to discuss these with your consultant before taking them. Medication bought over the counter may help to control your pain but **not always** the condition. Always tell the pharmacist which prescribed medications you are already taking when buying over-the-counter drugs.

Remember, while you are on this medication, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have regular blood tests and it is important that you do not miss any of these tests. If your hospital appointment is rescheduled, contact the rheumatology helpline if you need more blood forms.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following:

Arthritis Care

Tel: 0808 800 4050

Website: www.arthritiscare.org.uk

NHS Choices

Website: www.nhs.uk

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Rheumatology helpline on 01384 244789 (this is an answer machine so please do not use this helpline in an emergency) or speak to your pharmacist

You can download or print this leaflet from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/rheumatology/>

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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