

Clonidine (say: clon-e-dean) for parents and carers

What is clonidine used for?

- Clonidine (also called Dixarit® or Catapres®) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of migraine, flushing and high blood pressure
- It can sometimes also be used to help the symptoms of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), tics and Tourette's syndrome
- Clonidine is sometimes tried where symptoms (e.g. sleep, hyperactivity and aggression) have not improved enough with the usual treatments.
- It seems to work best when used with other treatments
- It is made as tablets and a 50mcg/5ml liquid.

What is the usual dose of clonidine?

- The usual dose of clonidine for ADHD is around 0.05-0.3mg (50-300 micrograms) a day, usually given 3-4 times a day.

How should my child take clonidine?

- The tablets should be swallowed with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing, so they do not stick in the throat
- It can be taken with or after food
- If your child has problems swallowing the tablets may be crushed and mixed with soft foods (e.g. custard) or dispersed in water.

When should my child take clonidine?

- Try to give it at regular times each day
- If the label says to take it twice a day this is usually best in the morning and evening.

What are the alternatives to clonidine?

- There are other medicines (e.g. methylphenidate), therapies and treatments for ADHD.

☞ See our "Handy chart" for ADHD to help you compare the medicines available and how long to take them

☞ This will help you talk to your prescriber, nurse, pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

How long will clonidine take to work?

- It probably takes about 4 weeks to start to work for ADHD.

How long will my child need to keep taking clonidine for?

- Your child might need to keep taking clonidine for several years
- Ask your doctor about this.

Is clonidine addictive and can my child stop taking it suddenly?

- Clonidine is not a stimulant and not addictive but it is unwise to stop taking it suddenly
- Firstly, clonidine can reduce blood pressure, and stopping it suddenly can lead to blood pressure going up quickly. This can be quite dangerous
- Secondly, the ADHD symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some weeks or even months after clonidine has been stopped
- When the time comes, clonidine should be reduced by a gradual drop in the dose over several weeks
- It normally works out much better if stopping medication in a planned way at a time when stress levels are lower, rather than e.g. around exams or life events
- Discuss this with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist

See our handy fact sheet on 'Coming off Medicines'

What should I do if my child forgets to take a dose of clonidine at the right time?

- Give the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 3-4 hours of your child's next dose
- If you remember after this, just give the next dose as normal
- Do not try to catch up by giving two doses at once as your child may get more side effects.

If your child has problems remembering your doses (as many people do) ask to see our Handy Fact Sheet "Remembering to take your medicines".

Will clonidine affect my other medication?

Clonidine can interact with many other medicines:

- This includes some antibiotics and treatments for high blood pressure
- There is no problem with the 'Contraceptive Pill'

- Make sure any prescriber and/or pharmacist who treats your child knows they are taking clonidine.

You **must** see the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) for the full possible list. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions carefully.

Can my child drink alcohol while taking it?

- Alcohol and clonidine together can make your child feel sleepy, tired, dizzy and lightheaded.

Will my child need any blood or other tests if taking clonidine?

- Your child should not need any blood or other tests while taking clonidine.

Can my child cycle or drive while taking it?

- Your child may feel a bit light-headed at first when taking clonidine.
- Until this wears off, or you know how clonidine affects him or her, they should not cycle, drive or operate machines.

What sort of side-effects might my child get if taking clonidine?

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on. You **must** also see the maker's Patient Information Leaflet for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some people get no side effects at all. Some side effects are the brain getting used to a medicine and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks. Starting at a lower dose may help. If you think your child might have a side effect to this medicine, you should ask your prescriber, pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
VERY COMMON (<i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Fatigue	Feeling tired all the time. This may happen early on in treatment and should go away.	If your child feels like this for more than a week after starting clonidine, tell your doctor. It may be possible to adjust your child's dose slightly. It should usually wear off.
Dizziness	Your child feels light-headed and faint, especially when standing up	Your child should try not to stand up too quickly, and should try and lie down when they feel it coming on. They should not cycle or drive.
Dry mouth	Not much saliva or spit.	Suck sugar-free boiled sweets or gum. If it is bad, your doctor may be able to give your child a mouth spray.
COMMON (<i>fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
Headache	Complaining of a painful head.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines.
Constipation	When your child wants to poop but can't (the opposite of diarrhoea). Your child can't pass a motion.	Make sure your child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eats enough fibre, cereal or fruit • Drinks enough fluid • Keeps active and gets some exercise e.g. walking. If this does not help, ask your pharmacist for a mild laxative.
Insomnia	Not being able to fall asleep at night	Discuss this with your doctor. Your child's dose may be able to be changed.
UNCOMMON (<i>fewer than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i>)		
Raynaud's phenomena	Where your child's fingers and toes feel cold	This is because the blood isn't reaching your child's fingers and toes. See your doctor about this next time you meet.
RARE but important (<i>can be serious if not dealt with quickly</i>)		
Depression	Feeling low.	Talk to your doctor about this. It usually means your child's dose is too high.

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand more about your child's clonidine for ADHD. You **must** also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. The 'Handy charts' will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions.

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