

# Clomipramine for the treatment of non-REM parasomnias

This leaflet will give you information about clomipramine, which has been prescribed to treat your sleep disorder. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the doctor, pharmacist or nurse caring for you.

## What are non-REM parasomnias?

Sleep is divided into two different stages: rapid eye movement (REM), where we do most of our dreaming, and non-REM (which can be divided again, into light and deep stages of sleep).

People who have non-REM parasomnias have partial awakenings from deep sleep during the night. This leads to people having abnormal, unwanted events or experiences, sometimes being able to perform complex tasks, which they may not remember as they are still partially asleep. This can include sleepwalking or experiencing sleep terrors. In extreme cases, non-REM parasomnias can cause physical injury or severe emotional upset.

## What is clomipramine?

Clomipramine belongs to a group of medicines called anti-depressants, but it can also be used to treat non-REM parasomnia. Clomipramine works by altering the levels of certain chemicals in the brain, which can help to reduce the number of partial awakenings in people with non-REM parasomnias.

## Taking an unlicensed medicine

The use of clomipramine for the treatment of non-REM parasomnia is unlicensed, which means that the manufacturer of the medicine has not specified it can be used in this way. However, there is evidence that it works to treat this particular condition. The leaflet, **Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients**, has more information about unlicensed medicines. If you would like a copy, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Alternatively you can call the Pharmacy Medicines Helpline (details are at the end of this leaflet).

## How do I take the medicine?

For the treatment of non-REM parasomnia, clomipramine should be taken at bedtime. Swallow the capsules whole with a drink of water, with or without food. Keep taking the capsules until your consultant tells you otherwise. Stopping suddenly can cause unwanted side effects, so your consultant will want you to reduce your dose gradually if you need to stop treatment.

## What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?

If you forget to take a dose of clomipramine, don't worry. Take the next dose when it is due. **Do not take an extra dose the following night to make up for the missed dose.**

## Are there any side effects?

In addition to their desired effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side effects although not everyone gets them. The following are examples of some of the side effects reported by patients taking clomipramine. The unwanted effects often fade as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your GP or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

Side effect	What should I do if it happens?
<b>Very common (more than one in 10)</b>	
Feeling or being sick Diarrhoea	Stick to simple foods. Avoid rich or spicy foods. If you are sick or have diarrhoea, drink plenty of water to replace lost fluids.
Dry mouth	Try chewing sugar-free gum or sucking sugar-free sweets.
Constipation	Try to eat a well-balanced diet containing plenty of fibre and drink plenty of water each day.
Headache	Drink plenty of water and take your usual painkiller, for example, paracetamol.
Feeling restless or shaky	These usually settle within a few days. If any becomes troublesome or severe, speak with your consultant or GP.
Feeling dizzy, tired or weak Blurred vision	If this happens, do not drive or use tools or machinery until you feel better. Do not drink alcohol.
<b>Common (between one in 100 and one in 10)</b>	
Feeling faint or light-headed, especially when getting up from a sitting or lying position	Getting up more slowly may help. If you begin to feel faint, sit down until the feeling passes.
Changes to blood test results and any changes to your heart rhythm	Your consultant will monitor any changes and alter treatment accordingly.
Sweating or hot flushes Difficulty in passing urine Increased appetite Feeling confused Disturbed sleep, yawning Lack of concentration Muscle weakness Itchy skin rash Changes in weight, sexual function or taste Breast tenderness Ringing in ears	If any of these become troublesome, speak with your GP for advice.

For further information on side effects, please see the manufacturer's leaflet that comes with the medicine.

**Important:** if you experience any of the following symptoms, contact your GP for advice **as soon as possible:**

- Any changes to your mood (such as feeling anxious, nervous or agitated), behaviour, or thinking (forgetful).
- Any suicidal thoughts, or thoughts about harming yourself

## Is there anything else I need to know?

This medication needs to be taken regularly. It can take a week or two after starting this treatment before the effect builds up, and up to four weeks before you feel the full benefit. It is important that you continue taking it, even if you think it is not helping. The dose of clomipramine may need to be increased over time.

Clomipramine can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. You should try to avoid exposure to strong sunlight, and use a sun cream with a high protection factor. Do not use sunbeds.

Clomipramine can alter the levels of sugar in your blood. If you have diabetes you may need to check your blood sugar more regularly. Your GP can advise you about this.

Do not drink alcohol while you are taking clomipramine. Mixing alcohol with clomipramine may increase the risk of other side effects such as drowsiness, confusion, and blurred vision.

If you are a driver, please be aware that clomipramine may affect your reactions and ability to drive. It is an offence to drive while your reactions are impaired. Even if your driving ability is not impaired, if you drive, you are advised to carry some evidence with you which shows that the medicine has been prescribed for you – a repeat prescription form or the patient information leaflet from the packet is generally considered suitable.

If you are due to have any medical treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment that you are taking this medicine, as it can interfere with some anaesthetics.

Clomipramine should be kept out of reach of children. If anyone other than you takes this medicine, you, they, or their parent/carer should contact NHS 111 for advice. If they are unwell, they should call for an ambulance.

The expiry date is printed on the container. Do not use the medicine after this date. The remainder should be returned to your local pharmacy to be thrown away.

### **Pregnancy and breastfeeding:**

We do not recommend the use of this medicine if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. You should let your consultant know if you are planning a pregnancy so that a management plan can be agreed. If you discover that you are pregnant, please contact your consultant for advice as soon as possible.

**Sleep hygiene:** Taking clomipramine is not a replacement for a good sleep routine. It is still important to aim to get around seven to eight hours of sleep at night if possible. It is advisable to go to bed when tired, and get up at about the same time each day.

## Can I take clomipramine with other medicines?

Clomipramine may interact with some medicines. It is important to let us know about any medicines that you are currently taking so that we can check clomipramine is suitable for you. If you are buying any medicines over the counter from a pharmacy always mention that you have been prescribed clomipramine. Although it is safe to take paracetamol with this medicine, ask for advice before buying any other painkillers, or any flu remedies or antihistamines. Advice should also be sought when purchasing herbal or homeopathic remedies.

## How will my treatment be reviewed?

Your treatment will be reviewed on an ongoing basis at the Sleep Disorders Centre and the dose adjusted depending on your symptoms. This will be a long-term treatment if it is of benefit. Your consultant will want to check to make sure that the treatment is helping. You may need to have your blood pressure and heart rate checked regularly.

## How do I get a repeat prescription?

Your GP will give you a repeat prescription for clomipramine which you can take to your local pharmacy for supply. Should your GP not prescribe melatonin for you, please contact the Sleep Disorders Centre for advice. Please make sure you request your repeat prescription early enough to prevent you running out, or missing, any doses of your medication.

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your sleep disorder, please contact the Sleep Disorders Centre, **t:** 020 7188 3430, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Out of hours, please leave a message and a member of staff will call you back in working hours, or contact your GP or NHS 111.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS)      **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)      **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

### Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

**t:** 020 7188 8815      **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

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