

Clomipramine for the treatment of cataplexy in narcolepsy

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide you with some information about clomipramine which has been prescribed to treat your cataplexy. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the doctor, pharmacist or nurse caring for you.

What is cataplexy in narcolepsy?

Narcolepsy is a long-term condition which causes excessive sleepiness during the day and may disrupt your sleep at night. You can also have sleep attacks where you fall asleep at inappropriate times during the day without any warning. Cataplexy is a condition associated with narcolepsy that results in sudden muscle weakness, triggered by strong emotions such as laughter, anger, fright or surprise. Muscle weakness can vary in severity, and cataplexy attacks can differ in both nature and duration.

What is clomipramine?

Clomipramine belongs to a group of medicines called anti-depressants. It can be used to treat cataplexy in narcolepsy. Clomipramine works by interfering with certain chemicals in the brain which may be involved in causing the symptoms of cataplexy.

How do I take the medicine?

For the treatment of cataplexy, clomipramine should be taken once a day at bedtime. Clomipramine may be taken with or without food. Swallow the capsules whole with a drink of water. Keep taking the capsules until your consultant tells you otherwise. Stopping suddenly can cause unwanted side effects and severe cataplexy attack(s), 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?

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.

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

Side effect	What should I do if it happens?
Very common (more than one in 10)	
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.
Common (between one in 100 and one in 10)	
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 Feeling shaky 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.

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.

Can I take clomipramine with other medicines?

Clomipramine may interact with some medicines. It is therefore 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 buying herbal or homeopathic remedies.

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 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 then 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.

Narcolepsy and driving: In the UK, you are required by law to let the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) know if you are diagnosed with narcolepsy. You may be allowed to drive again when your symptoms are well controlled with medication, but you will need to have regular reviews. Your consultant will advise you about this.

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.

How will my treatment be reviewed?

Your treatment will be reviewed on an ongoing basis at the sleep 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. Please make sure you request your repeat prescription early to prevent you running out or risk missing any doses of your medication.

Useful sources of information

Narcolepsy UK, **w:** www.narcolepsy.org.uk. You might find this charity's website useful for connecting with patients who suffer from the same condition as you, but any information found should not alter your current treatment. You should discuss any new advice with the doctor caring for your condition.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your sleep disorder, please contact the Sleep Disorder 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 during 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

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

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** 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

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