



Patient and Caregiver Information on Clonidine

Clonidine was originally approved to treat high blood pressure, and is used in the treatment of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and tic disorder in children and adults. It has also been found effective for controlling some problematic behaviors in children and adults, including patients with autism, in decreasing symptoms in certain anxiety disorders as well as in schizophrenia, and in increasing patient comfort during heroin and nicotine withdrawal. Ask your doctor if you are not sure why you are taking this drug.

Note: This medication may not have formal approval by regulatory agencies such as Health Canada or the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in children or adolescents for some or all of the above uses.

How quickly will the drug start working?

Some response to clonidine is usually noted within the first week of treatment of ADHD and tends to increase over the next 3 weeks.

How does your doctor decide on the dosage?

Clonidine comes in both a tablet and a transdermal patch. The dose is based on body weight. The tablet is usually taken once or twice daily (extended-release forms) or several times a day (short-acting form), while the patch is applied to the upper arm or chest and is left there for a period of one week.

Do not increase or decrease the dose without speaking to your doctor. Do not take off the patch mid-week unless you have been told to do so by your doctor.

How long should you take this medication?

Clonidine is usually prescribed for a period of several months or years for ADHD. The length of use for other conditions varies.

What side effects may happen?

Side effects may happen with any drug. They are not usually serious and do not happen to everyone. Side effects may sometimes occur before beneficial effects of the medication are noticed. If you think you may be having a side effect, speak to your doctor or pharmacist as they can help you decrease it or cope with it.

Common side effects that should be reported to your doctor at the **NEXT VISIT** include:

- Feeling sleepy and tired – the problem goes away with time. Use of other drugs that make you drowsy will worsen the problem. Avoid activities that require alertness (e.g., driving, operating machinery) if drowsiness persists.
- Dry mouth – sour candy, mints, and sugarless gum help increase saliva in your mouth. Do not drink sugar-containing drinks as they may increase your risk for dental cavities and increase your weight. Drink water and brush your teeth regularly.

- Dizziness – get up from a lying or sitting position slowly; dangle your legs over the edge of the bed for a few minutes before getting up. Sit or lie down if dizziness persists or if you feel faint, then contact your doctor.
- Headache – this tends to be temporary and can be managed by taking pain medicine (e.g., acetaminophen or ibuprofen) when required. If the headache persists or is “troubling,” contact your doctor.

Rare side effects you should report to your doctor **RIGHT AWAY** include:

- Fast, slow or irregular heart beat
- Skin rash with swelling, itching
- Sore mouth, gums or throat
- Any unusual bruising or bleeding, appearance of splotchy purplish darkening of the skin
- Nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, feeling tired, weak, feverish or like you have the flu
- Yellow tinge in the eyes or to the skin; dark-colored urine (pee)
- Severe agitation, restlessness, or irritability
- Changes in mood or depressed mood

Let your doctor know **right away** if you miss your period or think you may be **pregnant**, plan to become pregnant, or are breastfeeding.

What should you do if you forget to take a dose of your medication?

If you take clonidine more than once a day and you forget to take a dose by more than 6 hours, skip the missed dose and continue with your regular schedule. **DO NOT DOUBLE THE DOSE.**

Is this drug safe to take with other medication?

Because clonidine can change the effect of other medication or may be affected by other medication, always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking other drugs, including those you can buy without a prescription such as cold remedies and herbal preparations. Always inform any doctor or dentist that you see that you are taking clonidine.

Precautions/considerations

1. Report to your doctor any changes in sleeping or eating habits or changes in mood or behavior.
2. Do not change your dose or stop the drug suddenly, without speaking with your doctor, as it may result in withdrawal symptoms including insomnia and changes in blood pressure. If you need to stop taking this medication, your doctor will tell you how to gradually reduce your dosage to prevent changes in blood pressure.
3. Use caution while performing tasks requiring alertness as clonidine can cause fatigue.
4. This drug may increase the effects of alcohol, making you more sleepy, dizzy, and lightheaded. If taken together with alcohol, this may make it dangerous for you to drive, operate machinery, or perform tasks that require careful attention.

What else do I need to know about clonidine?

1. If using the clonidine patch and it begins to loosen from the skin after application, apply adhesive tape directly over the patch to make sure it stays on for the rest of the week.
2. Take off the used patch before applying a new patch to the skin. Handle used transdermal patches carefully; fold the patch in half with the sticky sides together, and place inside a baggie prior to discarding. Keep out of reach of children and pets.
3. If you take clonidine extended-release tablets (Kapvay), swallow the tablet whole. Do not crush, split or chew the tablet.
4. Store your medication in a clean dry area at room temperature. Keep all medication out of reach of children.

If you have any questions regarding this medication, please ask your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.