

Hydroxychloroquine

Information for parents/carers
and young people



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Introduction

This leaflet contains information about the use of hydroxychloroquine in children.

It tells you:

- how the medicine works
- how it should be given
- whether there are any side effects.

Please also read the general information leaflets available at <http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk>

Why have I been given this leaflet?

The leaflet will help you to remember what your doctor has told you about this medicine. It will also help you to decide whether you want to go ahead with this treatment.

For most medicines, information is provided by the manufacturer in the medicine package. Hydroxychloroquine is available as 200mg tablets and a 100mg in 5ml suspension. The hydroxychloroquine 200mg tablets are a licensed medicine and a manufacturer's leaflet is available. However, the treatment is unlicensed for use in some circumstances and so the leaflet in the medicines package doesn't tell you everything you need to know.

The suspension is an unlicensed medicine and a manufacturer's information leaflet is not available. This leaflet has been written to give you some extra information in both of these circumstances.

So this medicine does not have a licence. What does this mean?

The leaflet called unlicensed medicines available at <http://www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/> tells you more about medicine licensing regulations. It also tells you why unlicensed medicines are sometimes used.

What is hydroxychloroquine and how does it work?

Hydroxychloroquine helps to reduce the over-activity of the immune system and it is used to limit inflammation when used to treat autoimmune diseases. This helps to reduce the signs and symptoms of the disease such as pain and swelling. It is used in the treatment of a number of conditions such as lupus (SLE), arthritis, sarcoidosis and interstitial lung disease. Hydroxychloroquine can also help in the treatment of dermatological conditions caused or aggravated by sunlight.

Hydroxychloroquine needs to be taken for several weeks before you see any improvements.

When should hydroxychloroquine not be taken?

You/Your child should not take this medicine if:

- they have had a previous allergic reaction to hydroxychloroquine
- they have pre-existing eye changes
- they have galactose intolerance, Lapp lactase deficiency or glucose - galactose malabsorption

Safe reliable contraception is very important when taking immunosuppressive medications. Some medications can cause abnormalities to an unborn child during pregnancy and can affect both the male sperm and the female eggs. Please discuss contraception or planning a pregnancy with your doctor or nurse. They can give you information on what risks the medication may cause to you and your baby.

If you think there is a possibility that you are pregnant or your partner may be pregnant please contact your nurse specialist or family doctor immediately.

How should I give hydroxychloroquine?

Your doctor will tell you the dose of hydroxychloroquine you should give yourself/your child, and this should be written on the medicine container you receive. This will be based on your child's weight.

Hydroxychloroquine comes in 200mg tablets or as a 100mg in 5 ml suspension. Tablets should be swallowed whole. The suspension should be given by mouth, using a medicine spoon or oral syringe.

Do not give you/your child indigestion remedies at the same time of day as the hydroxychloroquine. Hydroxychloroquine should be taken with or after food.

Are there any side effects?

Most medicines cause side effects. The manufacturer's leaflet (if you receive one) contains a list of the known side effects for this medicine. Everyone reacts differently to medicines. Your child may have some side effects or none at all.

The most common side effects include nausea, headaches and rashes. These can resolve after a few days, but if they continue any longer than this, please contact your prescribing doctor.

Rare side effects include bruising or infection. If not already done so, a blood test will be checked before starting hydroxychloroquine, so we have baseline results to compare against if any problems occur later in the treatment. No routine blood tests are needed whilst taking hydroxychloroquine.

Are there any other side effects if hydroxychloroquine is taken for a long time?

A very rare side effect of taking high dose hydroxychloroquine (>5mg/kg/day) for a long period of time (5 years or more) is that retina of the eye (the layer of cells in the back of the eye that detect light and allow you to see) can become damaged. This possible damage is prevented by keeping the dose low and Ophthalmology monitoring the eyes closely every year after starting hydroxychloroquine.

Please report any concerns with blurred vision or difficulty reading to the medical team caring for your child. Usually an optician assessment is the first step if there are any concerns.

As with all immunosuppressant medication we would recommend safe sun exposure, and in particular avoiding sun burn, due to an increased risk of long term skin damage.

Hydroxychloroquine should be used with extra care if you/ your child has:

- Kidney impairment

- Liver disease
- Severe gastrointestinal, neurological or blood disorders
- Sensitivity to quinine or has glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency
- Psoriasis

Will hydroxychloroquine affect any other medicines?

Hydroxychloroquine can interact with some medications, include:

- Digoxin
- Neostigmine
- Pyridostigmine
- Cimetidine
- Insulin and antidiabetics
- Aminoglycoside antibiotics
- Antacids

Tell your/your child's doctor or pharmacist about all the other medicines you/your child takes. This includes any medicines prescribed by another doctor as well as medicines bought from a pharmacy or supermarket and any herbal remedies.

If you are/your child is prescribed a new medicine, or you want to buy a medicine (for your child), it is important that you tell the doctor or pharmacist about all the medicines that you/your child takes, including hydroxychloroquine. You should also tell your/your child's dentist next time you see him/her.

Please arrange an influenza vaccine every winter, due to the immunosuppressive nature of the medicines. You may also need a pneumococcal vaccine.

Where should I store hydroxychloroquine at home?

Store hydroxychloroquine in a cool, dry place, away from direct sunlight. It is important that all medicines are stored out of reach of children.

Where do I get a further supply?

Further supplies are available from your GP. Ask your GP to write a prescription when you have at least a weeks supply left and take the prescription to your local pharmacy in good time. The pharmacy may not have the medicine in stock and may need a few days to arrange a supply.

How can I find out more?

Your agreement should be obtained, whenever possible, before prescribing any medicine for you/your child.

This leaflet has been written to provide general information about hydroxychloroquine in children. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor or nursing team.

Children's Rheumatology Nursing Team

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© The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust • 3rd edition (Ver 1)
Developed by: Sian Shenton - Advanced Clinical Pharmacist
(Paediatric Medicine)
Produced by: Medical Illustration Services • MID code: 20231009_012/EP

LN003116
Publication date
10/2023
Review date
10/2026