

PATIENT INFORMATION ON HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE

[Hi-drok-si-klaw-uh-kwin]

Brand names:
Plaquenil, Hequinel

This information sheet has been produced by the Australian Rheumatology Association to help you understand the medication that has been prescribed for you. It includes important information about:

- **how you should take your medication**
- **what are the possible side effects**
- **what tests you may have to monitor your condition and to detect unwanted effects**
- **other precautions you should take while you are taking hydroxychloroquine.**

Please read it carefully and discuss it with your doctor.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

- You must see your rheumatologist regularly to make sure the treatment is working and check for possible side effects.
- You should have regular blood tests as suggested by your rheumatologist.
- If you are worried about any side effects, you should contact your rheumatologist as soon as possible.
- If you stop hydroxychloroquine for any reason, you must contact your rheumatologist.

For more information about inflammatory conditions associated with arthritis, see Arthritis Australia's website:
www.arthritisaustralia.com.au

What is hydroxychloroquine?

Hydroxychloroquine is a medication used to treat certain childhood rheumatic conditions (diseases which may affect joints, muscles, skin or eyes). It is most commonly used to treat lupus (also known as SLE).

Hydroxychloroquine was originally designed to treat malaria.

It is a medication that works by modifying the way the immune system works. It reduces the damage done by inflammation, rather than just reducing pain. Because of this, it is called a disease modifying anti-rheumatic drug (DMARD). Other medications in this group include leflunomide, methotrexate and sulfasalazine.

How will it help?

It is a medication that works slowly. It may take 2-3 months before you notice your child improving. It is often used in combination with other medications to control the disease.

How is hydroxychloroquine given?

Hydroxychloroquine is given as an oral tablet.

What is the dose?

This depends on the weight of your child.

How long will it be used for?

It may be continued for many years particularly for treating lupus.

Are there any side effects?

Hydroxychloroquine is usually very effective in improving your child's condition, but as with all medications side effects can occur. Some are common, and some are rare. Most people don't have any problems when they take hydroxychloroquine.

Most common side effects	Treatment
Nausea & diarrhoea	• Take with food
Rare side effects	Treatment
Sun sensitivity	• Hats and sunscreen
Allergic reactions	• Usually improves when hydroxychloroquine is stopped

Serious eye problems are extremely rare, if you are on this medication for more than a few years your doctor may recommend an annual eye check.



Australian
Rheumatology
Association

hydroxychloroquine
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Arthritis
AUSTRALIA

Things you need to know when your child is taking this medication

This medication has a bitter taste, so it is best taken with food.

What to do if your child is sick

It is safe to give hydroxychloroquine even if your child has a fever or another illness.

Interactions

Hydroxychloroquine is generally safe with other medications.

Immunisations

Follow the normal immunisation schedule.

Infections

There is no increased risk of infections if your child is taking hydroxychloroquine.

Myths and misconceptions

You may hear a lot of different information about hydroxychloroquine from friends, pharmacists or people that you know. If you are worried about anything, please talk to your child's doctor or nurse.

If your child is taking hydroxychloroquine they should see their paediatric rheumatologist regularly to make sure the treatment is working and to minimise any possible side effects.

Questions?

If you have any questions or concerns write them down and discuss them with your doctor.

Your doctor's contact details

You should see your rheumatologist regularly to make sure the treatment is working and to minimise any possible side effects.

The information in this sheet has been obtained from various sources and has been reviewed by the Australian Rheumatology Association. It is intended as an educational aid and does not cover all possible uses, actions, precautions, side effects, or interactions of the medications mentioned. This information is not intended as medical advice for individual problems nor for making an individual assessment of the risks and benefits of taking a particular medication. It can be reproduced in its entirety but cannot be altered without permission from the ARA. The NHMRC publication: *How to present the evidence for consumers: preparation of consumer publications* (2000) was used as a guide in developing this publication.

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