

GENERIC NAME:

Hydroxychloroquine



BRAND NAME:

Plaquenil

How it works:

- Plaquenil is a disease modifying anti-rheumatic drug (DMARD).
- It reduces the symptoms of joint inflammation (swelling, stiffness and pain) and slows down the disease process and damage to joints in people with Rheumatoid Arthritis, & other types of arthritis
- Stabilizes the immune system in Systemic Lupus Erythematosus leading to improvement in arthritis, rash, fatigue, and mouth sores.
- Also used to treat parasitic infections such as malaria

How quickly it works:

- Improvement in symptoms will occur in 6 to 12 weeks,.
- A 6 month trial of plaquenil is recommended

How to take:

- Tablets are available in 200 mg
- The dosage is based on your lean body weight with the standard dose ranging from 200 to 400 mg per day.
- The dosage should not exceed 6.5 mg/kg/day
- Take tablet once or twice daily as prescribed
- Take with food to reduce stomach upset
- **If you forget to take your plaquenil** at your usual time of the day, take the dose as soon as you remember on that day.

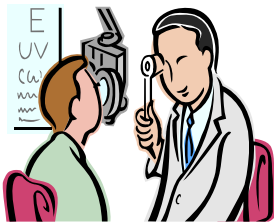


Monitoring: Lab Tests:



- No specific blood work is required for the monitoring of Plaquenil.
- Your doctor may order blood tests every 3 to 6 months to follow the activity of your arthritis.

Eye examination:



- An eye examination by an ophthalmologist is required within the first year of starting Plaquenil. Further examinations are done every 6 to 18 months while taking the medication as recommended by your eye doctor. This eye examination includes testing your vision, eye pressure, and visual fields.
- These eye examinations are done because plaquenil can cause damage to the back of the eye (retina). These changes in the eye are not usually a problem if found in the early stages. If serious damage occurs, then it is permanent.

Side Effects:

Plaquenil is generally well tolerated and most people have no side effects at all.

Rare side effects:

- Nausea & loss of appetite
- Occasional stomach cramps and/or diarrhea.
- Mild blurring of vision
- Increased sensitivity to the sun
- Skin rashes, including changes in the colour of the skin & mucous membranes
- May increase outbreaks of psoriasis
- Headache or dizziness
- Nervousness or restlessness
- Difficulty sleeping, & may experience nightmares
- Ringing in the ears and/or altered hearing
- Muscle weakness
- Damage to the back of the eye (retina). Symptoms include difficulty reading or seeing (parts of words, or objects may be missing) or blurred vision. When plaquenil is taken in the recommended dose, the risk of change in the eye's retina is exceedingly small.

Managing side effects:



Contact your doctor:

- If develop any of the above signs or symptoms. Side effects can occur anytime during treatment and are usually temporary.
- Side effects are often related to the dosage of plaquenil that you are taking. A decrease or temporary withdrawal of Plaquenil may be required.

Stomach/Bowel Symptoms:

- Take the medication with meals or at bedtime.
- Take in divided doses.



Blurred Vision:

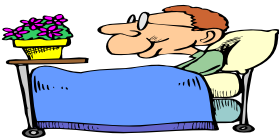
- Be careful with driving or operating machinery.
- Contact physician for reduction or withdrawal of Plaquenil.

Sun Sensitivity:

- Wear protective eyewear & clothing.
- Use sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.

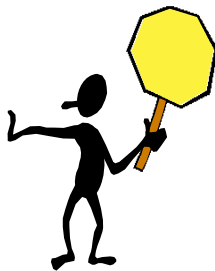


Illness/Surgery:



- Plaquenil does not need to be stopped for illness/surgery.
- Develop a plan with your rheumatologist about your arthritis medications & herbal supplements when having upcoming surgery.

Precautions:



Abnormality of the Retina

- Plaquenil may not be used if eye problems have developed in the past from anti-malarial drugs or if you have an abnormality of the retina.



Pregnancy:

- Plaquenil has been used safely in pregnancy.
- Notify your doctor if you become pregnant while taking plaquenil.

What about other medications?

Plaquenil is safe to be taken with other disease modifying drugs, NSAIDS, cortisone & pain relieving medication.

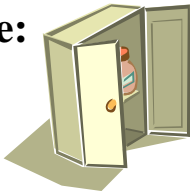
Diabetes medications:

- It has been reported that taking Plaquenil with diabetes medications (pills or insulin) may enhance the effect of lowering your blood glucose level. This may require an increase in blood glucose testing and a possible reduction in your diabetes medications.

Digoxin:

- Taking Plaquenil with Digoxin may increase the levels of digoxin in the blood, therefore these levels should be monitored.

Storage:



- Keep medication in the original container and tightly closed..
- Keep in a cool cupboard, & not in your bathroom as it is a warm, moist environment.

General medication considerations:



1. Take your medication as instructed by your physician.

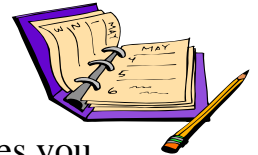
Work with your physician on how much medication you need. Taking more medication than is recommended increases your risk of side effects. Skipping doses of medication will decrease the desired effect of the medication.

2. Keep a diary.

As a reminder, record when you take your medications & any reasons for changes or withdrawal of medications.

3. Keep a medication list in your wallet.

Record all medications, vitamin/mineral & herbal supplements you are presently taking & any allergies you may have.



Disclaimer:

This information does not replace medical advice. Specific questions about medications should be discussed with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

