

Hydroxychloroquine (Brand name: Plaquenil)

Information about your medicine, benefits, side effects and precautions.

What is it?

Hydroxychloroquine is a medicine 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 medicine that works by suppressing the immune system. 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 medicines in this group include leflunomide, methotrexate and sulfasalazine.

How will it help?

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

How is hydroxychloroquine given?

Hydroxychloroquine is given orally, one tablet daily.

What is the dose?

This depends on the size and 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, like all medicines, 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 and diarrhoea | • Take with food |

| Rare side effects | Treatment |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Sun sensitivity | • Hats and sunscreen |

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

Things you need to know about this medicine

This medicine tastes bitter 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.

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

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL ARTHRITIS OFFICE FOR MORE INFORMATION SHEETS ON ARTHRITIS.

This medicine should be kept in a safe place, as accidental overdose can be serious.

This sheet was produced in association with the Australian Paediatric Rheumatology Group

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