

# Cholestyramine

Medication Information Leaflet

## What is this medication for?

This medication may be used to lower the amount of 'bad cholesterol' (low density lipoprotein or LDL-cholesterol) in the body. It may also help increase the amount of 'good cholesterol' (high density lipoprotein or HDL cholesterol). High 'bad cholesterol' levels can cause your blood vessels to clog up and increase the risk for chest pain (angina), heart attack or stroke. Hence, this medication can help reduce your risk for heart attack and stroke.

This medication may also be used in some patients to treat itch caused by a long term liver disease known as primary biliary cirrhosis, where the bile ducts (tubes that carry bile fluid) in your liver are slowly destroyed.

## How should I take/use this medication?

- Cholestyramine is a powder, packaged in a packet, to be taken with water. Do not take the powder on its own as it may make you choke.
- Dissolve each packet of powder in 120 to 180ml of water or fruit juice. Mix thoroughly before drinking.
- Do not sip or hold the mixture in your mouth for a long time, as it may cause some changes to the colour of your teeth.
- Cholestyramine may affect the absorption of other medications. Take other medications at least 1 hour before or 4 to 6 hours after taking cholestyramine.
- Take the number of sachets as prescribed by your doctor.
- You should continue taking your medication unless your doctor tells you to stop. If you stop taking your medication, your cholesterol level may rise again. Do not stop taking your medication without checking with your doctor.

## What should I do if I forget to take/use this medication?

- If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember.
- However, if it is almost time for your next dose, take only the usual dose. Do not double your dose or use extra medication to make up for the missed dose.

## **What precautions should I take?**

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You have allergies to fat binding agents or any other medications
- You have kidney disease
- You are pregnant or breast-feeding
- You are diagnosed to have complete blockage of the bile duct system

Please also inform your doctor about all other medications that you usually take. This is important as certain medications (e.g. warfarin) may interact with Cholestyramine and may affect their effectiveness or increase the risk of side effects.

## **What are some common side-effects of this medication?**

Some common side effects of cholestyramine include:

- Constipation
- Diarrhoea
- Nausea, vomiting

Speak to your doctor if these side effects are serious or happen for a long time.

## **What are some rare but serious side-effects that I need to seek medical advice immediately?**

The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should stop your medication and see your healthcare professional immediately.

## **What food or medication should I avoid when I take this medication?**

Cholestyramine may affect the absorption of other medications. Take other medications at least 1 hour before or 4 to 6 hours after taking cholestyramine.

## How should I store this medication?

Store in a cool and dry place, away from direct sunlight. Keep this medication away from children.

## How should I throw away this medication safely?

Pack this medication into a black trash bag and seal it tightly before throwing into the rubbish chute or bin.

### Disclaimers

If you take more than the recommended dose, please seek medical advice immediately. The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

*This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore. The content does not reflect drug availability and supply information in pharmacies and healthcare institutions. You are advised to check with the respective institutions for such information.*

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