



A red result means that your white blood cell count is much lower than normal. You will need to stop taking clozapine straight away.

An amber result means your white blood cell count is a little lower than normal. So, you will need a blood test twice a week until it goes back to normal (green) or goes "red".

A green result means that your white blood cell count is normal and you can carry on with clozapine.

As you know regular blood testing is needed when you are taking clozapine. This is because clozapine can cause a drop in the number of your white blood cells. White blood cells are made in the bone marrow and are used by the body to fight infections. If you don't have many white cells, your body will find it hard to fight infections such as 'flu or a sore throat.

The clozapine system uses a traffic light system to check the results from your blood tests. The system has a red, amber and a green light.

**The traffic light system**

Stop taking the clozapine tablets straight away. Carry on taking them could make you very ill. Return any tablets you have left to your clozapine clinic or your care co-ordinator.

**What should I do with the tablets I have left?**

If you get any 'flu-like symptoms such as a sore throat or fever let your doctor know as soon as possible.

Unless your "red" result is an error, you will have to stop taking clozapine right away. Once the clozapine is stopped your white blood cell count should return to normal within a few days. However, you will need to have a blood test every day until it is back to normal, to make sure this has happened.

**What happens now I've got a red result?**

A red result is not very common. It occurs in about 1 in 50 people (2%), usually in the first three months of taking clozapine. It can be caused by many different things other than clozapine, such as:

- other medication that affects the bone marrow, so please let your doctor know of any other medication that you might be taking
- your health, age or gender
- your ethnicity (e.g. being Asian or Afro-Caribbean)
- a blood testing error.

**What causes a red result?**

**Are there any problems if I have to stop taking clozapine suddenly?**

Most people do not get any problems. But, some people notice they are sweating a lot more, feeling sick, feel confused and may find it harder to fall asleep. If you do get any of these they should go away within a few days. Speak to your doctor if you any of these symptoms carry on for more than a few days or if your symptoms get worse.

**Will stopping clozapine make my symptoms worse?**

Possibly. As soon as possible, your doctor will give you another medicine to take.

**Can I take clozapine again in the future?**

This is different for every person, but if the red result is caused by clozapine, you are not usually allowed to take clozapine again. If the red result is caused by an error, there is a chance you may take clozapine again in the future.

**The small print:** With thanks to the clozapine clinic at Hellesdon Hospital, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust. You should also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find lots more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions e.g. driving, women's health, how it works, doses and interactions, and about the conditions.

Clozapine -  
Getting a red result

