

Clomethiazole (pron. clo-meth-ire-zole)

What is clomethiazole used for?

Clomethiazole (which used to be spelt chlormethiazole, and is also known as Heminevrin[®]) has two main uses. It can be used to help people who are stopping drinking alcohol, to help reduce the chance of fits or seizures. It is often also used to help treat insomnia i.e. problems getting to sleep (see separate PILL). Clomethiazole is available as capsules.

What is the usual dose of clomethiazole?

For alcohol withdrawal, clomethiazole usually starts at 2-3 capsules four times a day, and then decreases over the next nine days. This is often called a "clomethiazole detox".

How should I take clomethiazole?

Swallow the capsules with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat.

When should I take clomethiazole?

Take your clomethiazole exactly as it says on the label. There is no problem about taking clomethiazole with or after food.

What are the alternatives to clomethiazole?

There are other medicines (e.g. chlordiazepoxide, diazepam and carbamazepine), therapies and treatments for alcohol withdrawal. See our "Handy chart" to help you compare the medicines, how they work and their side effects.

How long will clomethiazole take to work?

Clomethiazole usually starts to work in about an hour. The effect wears off in about 4-8 hours or so.

How long will I need to keep taking clomethiazole for?

Because people can become dependent on clomethiazole, the course of clomethiazole is usually only nine days. It should not usually be taken for longer than that.

Is clomethiazole addictive?

Clomethiazole can be addictive, and you must be careful about this. If you take it for more than nine days, you might replace dependence on alcohol with dependence on clomethiazole.

Can I stop taking clomethiazole suddenly?

You should stick to the course as prescribed. If you stop drinking alcohol, you can get seizures or fits, and these can be very dangerous. Clomethiazole reduces the chances of these fits happening so do not stop it suddenly. You could discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What should I do if I forget to take a dose of clomethiazole?

Start again as soon as you remember unless it is nearly time for your next dose then take the next dose as normal. Do not try to catch up by taking two or more doses at once as you may get more side-effects. You should tell your doctor or therapist about this next time you talk (although a clomethiazole detox is usually carried out in hospital). If you have problems remembering your doses (as very many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse about this. There are some special packs, boxes and devices that can be used to help you remember.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking clomethiazole?

No.

Will clomethiazole affect my other medication?

Clomethiazole has very few interactions with other medicines.

- If clomethiazole is taken with benzodiazepines, it may cause more drowsiness.
- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and clomethiazole

Not all of these interactions happen in everyone. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions carefully. There are many other possible drug interactions.

What sort of side-effects might occur if I am taking clomethiazole?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from clomethiazole.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
COMMON (more than about 1 in 10 people might get these)		
Nasal congestion	Your nose being bunged up	This is because you can get increased mucus in the nose. Talk about this to your Doctor when you next talk.
Conjunctival irritation	Sore eyes	If you feel like this for more than a week after starting clomethiazole, tell your doctor.
Headache	Your head is pounding and painful.	Try paracetamol. Your pharmacist will be able to advise if this is safe to take with any other medicines you may be taking.
RARE (less than about 1 in 100 people might get these)		
Nausea and vomiting	Feeling sick and being sick.	Take your clomethiazole after food. If you are sick for more than a day, contact your doctor. This tends to wear off after a few days or so.
Confusion	Your mind is all mixed up or confused.	Discuss with your doctor when you next see him or her. He or she may want to adjust your drug or dose.
Rash and urticaria	Blotches seen on the skin.	Stop taking clomethiazole and see your doctor now.
Hangover	You feel sleepy or sluggish the next morning.	Don't drive or use machinery.

Do not be worried by this list of side effects. Some people get no side effects at all and others may get some effects that are not listed in this table. If you think you might have a side effect to your medicine, you should ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you want to know more, go to our website for links to other websites with more information.

Will I need a blood test if I am taking clomethiazole?

You should not need a blood test while you are taking clomethiazole.

Can I drive or cycle while I am taking clomethiazole?

You may feel a sleepy the next morning after taking clomethiazole. You should be careful as it may slow down your reaction times. Until this wears off, or you know how clomethiazole affects you, do not drive or operate machinery.

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. 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. The "Handy charts" will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects.