

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

What is clomethiazole used for?

Clomethiazole (which used to be spelt chlormethiazole, and also known as Heminevrin[®]) can be used to help treat insomnia i.e. problems getting to sleep. It is also used sometimes to help people who are stopping drinking alcohol, to help reduce the chance of fits or seizures. It is one of a number of medicines called "hypnotics". Clomethiazole is available as capsules.

What is the usual dose of clomethiazole?

The usual dose of clomethiazole is around 1-4 capsules at bedtime for insomnia. The dose is different for alcohol withdrawal.

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 at bedtime. There is no problem about taking clomethiazole with or after food.

What are the alternatives to clomethiazole?

There are many other medicines (e.g. 'Z hypnotics'), talking therapies and treatments for insomnia and the causes of insomnia. See our "Handy charts" 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?

Please look one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice on how long you might need to take it for. It is not a good idea to take it every night as the effect may start to wear off.

Is clomethiazole addictive?

Clomethiazole can be addictive, and you should be careful about this. It is best to take clomethiazole only when you need it.

Can I stop taking clomethiazole suddenly?

Some people get something called "rebound insomnia" when they stop a hypnotic. This means they find it even more difficult to get to sleep than before. It is best to take clomethiazole only when you need it but if you have taken it every night for more than a few weeks, it would be best to reduce the dose slowly over a few days. You could discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

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

This is not really a problem.

Will clomethiazole affect my other medication?

Clomethiazole has very few interactions with other medicines.

- If clomethiazole is taken with benzodiazepines, alcohol or other sedatives, 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.

Can I drink alcohol while I am taking clomethiazole?

If you drink alcohol while taking clomethiazole it may well make you feel more sleepy, especially the next morning. This is particularly important if you need to drive or operate machinery and you must seek advice on this.

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 (<i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i>)		
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 meet.
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 (<i>less than about 1 in 100 people might get these</i>)		
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 a week 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 medicine 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. Discuss this with your doctor as there are some sleeping tablets that are less likely to do this.
OTHER		
Rebound insomnia	More difficult to get to sleep if you stop taking clomethiazole	If you feel like this for more than a week after stopping clomethiazole, tell your doctor.

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.