

# Hydroxychloroquine

## Information For Patient With Glomerulonephritis

Generic Name	Brand Name
Hydroxychloroquine (hye-drox-ee-KLOR-oh-kwin)	Plaquenil®

### What is Hydroxychloroquine and why is it being recommended for me?

- Hydroxychloroquine was first used to treat and prevent malaria, but now Hydroxychloroquine is used to control diseases of the immune system. It is mainly used in patients with lupus. In your case, it is being prescribed to control the activity of the body's immune system, prevent disease relapse, which may ultimately stabilize your kidney function.

### How should I take Hydroxychloroquine?

- The number of Hydroxychloroquine pills can change so make sure you are taking the correct dose.
- Hydroxychloroquine can be taken as a single daily dose or in two divided doses.
- Take Hydroxychloroquine with food or milk.
- Swallow the tablet whole. Do not crush, break, or chew it.
- If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. But, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the dose you missed and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not take two doses at the same time.

### What else do I need to know before taking Hydroxychloroquine?

- Always contact the clinic before starting any new prescriptions and/or nonprescription medications (including vitamins and herbal products).
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or breastfeeding to make them aware, but Hydroxychloroquine is considered safe to continue. Visit [ontariorenalnetwork.ca/en/kidney-care-resources/clinical-tools/pregnancy](http://ontariorenalnetwork.ca/en/kidney-care-resources/clinical-tools/pregnancy) for more information about pregnancy and breastfeeding for women with chronic kidney disease.

### What monitoring will I need?

- The clinic will order regular blood tests to monitor for side effects.
- There is a small risk that Hydroxychloroquine may damage the retina (part of the eye) and affect vision. The development of eye problems is unusual at the doses recommended by your nephrologist. This risk increases with long-term use and higher doses. For this reason, an annual eye exam is required (see section below on "Side effects and what to do" for more details).
- Let your optometrist know that you are on Hydroxychloroquine. Your yearly eye exam should be covered under OHIP. Speak with your nephrologist if there are coverage issues.

## What are the possible side effects of Hydroxychloroquine?

- All medications may cause side effects; however, many people only experience mild side effects. Contact the clinic if you have any concerns about the following possible side effects:

### Side effects and what to do

	Side Effects
<b>Most Common</b> (10-20% of people experience)	<b>Stomach upset, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This may improve as your body gets used to Hydroxychloroquine.</li> <li>• Taking Hydroxychloroquine with food may help.</li> </ul>
<b>Less Common</b> (less than 10% of people experience)	<b>Visual changes and damage to the eye</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If vision changes occur, report to your eye specialist and nephrologist immediately.</li> <li>• Vision changes can include: blurred vision, seeing halos around lights, seeing light flashes and streaks, difficulty seeing at night, colour changes, and visual field loss including blind spots or blind areas in your vision.</li> <li>• Damage to the eye can be detected on routine eye exams even before you notice any changes to your vision. For this reason, a yearly eye exam is necessary while taking Hydroxychloroquine.</li> </ul>
	<b>Loss or lack of appetite (anorexia)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your doctor may reduce the dose if this side effect persists.</li> </ul>
	<b>Headache</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This may improve as your body gets used to Hydroxychloroquine.</li> <li>• May take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to help with headaches.</li> </ul>
<b>Rare</b> (less than 1% of people experience)	<b>Skin rashes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be itchy and/or worsened by sunlight.</li> </ul>
	<b>Changes in skin pigment (darkening or dark spots) and hair (bleaching or thinning of hair)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These side effects usually resolve upon stopping or reducing the dose of the medication.</li> </ul>
	<b>Changes in heart rhythm (especially in combination with other medications)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your doctor may order an electrocardiogram (ECG) before (and possibly after) you start Hydroxychloroquine if you have heart disease and/or are taking multiple other medications that affect the heart rhythm.</li> </ul>
	<b>Anemia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some patients with glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency, a genetic disorder, may be at higher risk of hemolytic anemia. This is a condition where the red blood cells break down faster than they are made.</li> <li>• Tell your doctor if you have been diagnosed with G6PD deficiency before starting Hydroxychloroquine.</li> </ul>

Questions? Contact the Clinic at: \_\_\_\_\_

ORN gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the ORN GN Drug Access Task Group, the ORN GN Patient and Family Panel, and the ORN GN Priority Panel in preparing this handout. This handout is provided for informational purposes only. It is meant to supplement a discussion with your healthcare team. Please contact a pharmacist or other health care professionals if you have any further questions regarding this medication.