

Experts in Skin & Hair

Patient Information Leaflet: Hydroxychloroquine for Dermatological Conditions and Scalp Problems

What is Hydroxychloroquine?

Hydroxychloroquine is a medication that is primarily used to treat certain autoimmune diseases and is also effective in managing various dermatological conditions. It is an antimalarial drug that modulates the immune response and has anti-inflammatory properties, making it useful in treating skin issues associated with autoimmune diseases and other inflammatory conditions.

Uses of Hydroxychloroquine in Dermatology:

Hydroxychloroquine may be prescribed for the treatment of several dermatological conditions, including:

- **Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (Lupus):** A chronic autoimmune condition that can cause skin rashes, including a butterfly rash on the face.
- **Chronic Cutaneous Lupus Erythematosus:** A form of lupus that primarily affects the skin.
- **Discoid Lupus Erythematosus:** A form of lupus that frequently affects the scalp and can cause scarring permanent hair loss
- **Other Skin Conditions:** Conditions characterized by significant inflammation, such as dermatomyositis, lichen planus and morphea, may also benefit from hydroxychloroquine therapy.

How Does Hydroxychloroquine Work?

Hydroxychloroquine works by:

- Modulating the immune system to reduce inflammation.
- Interrupting the overactive immune response that characterizes autoimmune conditions.
- Decreasing the activity of certain immune cells that contribute to skin inflammation.

Dosage:

- The dosage of hydroxychloroquine will be determined by your consultant based on your weight, age and the specific condition being treated.
- It is usually taken orally in tablet form, typically once or twice a day.
- Always follow your consultant's instructions regarding dosage and duration of treatment.

Important Considerations:

- **Eye Health:** Hydroxychloroquine can potentially cause retinal damage, especially with long-term use. Regular eye examinations (typically once a year) are essential while on this medication.
- **Potential Drug Interactions:** Inform your healthcare provider about any other medications or supplements you are taking to avoid interactions.
- **Pregnancy and Breastfeeding:** Discuss with your provider if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding, as the benefits and risks should be evaluated.



Experts in Skin & Hair

Possible Side Effects:

While hydroxychloroquine is generally well-tolerated, some individuals may experience side effects, including:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Stomach cramps
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Skin rashes or changes in skin pigmentation
- Itching
- Rarely muscle weakness

Serious Side Effects:

Seek immediate medical attention if you experience any of the following:

- Vision changes (such as blurred vision or difficulty seeing)
- Severe allergic reactions (rash, itching, swelling, difficulty breathing)
- Symptoms of liver problems (yellowing of the skin or eyes, dark urine, significant fatigue)

Monitoring and Follow-Up:

- Regular follow-up appointments with your dermatologist are crucial to monitor your response to treatment and check for potential side effects.
- Routine blood tests may be necessary to assess liver function and overall health while taking hydroxychloroquine.

Lifestyle and Self-Care Tips:

- Stay hydrated and maintain a balanced diet to support overall health.
- Use sunscreen and protective clothing to keep your skin safe from sun exposure, particularly if you have lupus or other photosensitive conditions.
- Report any unusual symptoms or changes in your skin condition to your healthcare provider promptly.
- Smoking limits the effectiveness of hydroxychloroquine and therefore it is advisable not to smoke, or limit as much as possible.

When to Seek Medical Attention:

- If your skin condition worsens or does not improve with treatment.
- If you notice any signs of severe side effects or changes in your vision.
- If you have concerns regarding your treatment plan or any other symptoms.

Conclusion:

Hydroxychloroquine is an effective treatment option for various dermatological conditions, particularly those associated with autoimmune diseases. With proper monitoring and adherence to your treatment plan, many individuals can experience relief from symptoms and improved skin health.

For any questions about your treatment with hydroxychloroquine or to discuss your specific skin condition, please consult your dermatologist.

