

# Anti-Platelet Medicine

clopidogrel (Plavix®)

## Pharmacy Services

This is intended as a general reference.

It does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.



## What is clopidogrel?

Clopidogrel (say *klow-pih-duh-grel*) is given to people who have had a heart attack, a stroke, or have problems with blood circulation.

After a heart attack, some people have stents placed into the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle (the coronary arteries). After a stroke, they might have stents placed into the arteries that supply blood to the brain (carotid arteries). A stent is a tiny tube of reinforced with wire that helps keep the blocked artery open.

This medicine helps lower your chance of having another heart attack or stroke. It also helps prevent blood clots from forming inside the stents.

## How does clopidogrel work?

Clopidogrel stops a type of blood cell, called platelets, from clumping together and forming blood clots. Blood clots can be dangerous. They can block off the blood supply to the heart, brain, and other organs, causing a heart attack or stroke.

## What should I expect?

Although this medicine does lower your chances of having a heart attack or stroke, you will not be able to tell if this medicine is working or not. This means you need to keep taking your clopidogrel as directed even when you feel well.

## How do I take clopidogrel?

- Take this medicine at the same time each day.
- Take it with water, with or without food

Clopidogrel is often given along with low dose ASA (Aspirin®). Take the ASA pill at the same time you take your clopidogrel.

**Do not** change how much you are taking without talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

**Do not** stop taking this medicine suddenly without talking with your doctor or pharmacist. If you stop taking clopidogrel suddenly, it can increase the chances of having a heart attack or stroke.

## How long will I need to take clopidogrel?

People take clopidogrel for different lengths of time. Ask your doctor how long you might need to take this medicine.

Take the ASA for as long as your doctor instructs you to take it.

## What should I do if I miss a dose?

Do your best to **never miss a dose**, if possible.

If you do miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember that same day. If it is almost time for your next dose, take only that dose and return to your regular schedule.

**Do not** take 2 doses at the same time, unless your doctor has told you differently.

Let your doctor know of any missed doses at your next appointment.

Contact your pharmacist or doctor if you have any questions about how to take this medicine.

## How might clopidogrel affect my lifestyle?

**Tell others:** Before you have any dental work, medical procedures, or surgery, tell the doctor or dentist you are taking clopidogrel.

**Alcohol:** Drinking alcohol can irritate your stomach. This increases your chances of getting ulcers or bleeding in the stomach.

**Pregnancy:** Usually, this medicine should not be taken when pregnant or infant feeding. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or are breastfeeding / chestfeeding.

## Can I take clopidogrel with other medicines?

Clopidogrel can change how other medicines work and other medicines can change how clopidogrel works. This includes medicines prescribed for you, medicines you buy without a prescription, supplements, as well as herbal, alternative, and natural medicines.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist about any medicines or supplements that you are currently taking.

Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new medicines or medicinal products, especially products that can affect blood clotting or bleeding. This might also include some cough and cold medicines and muscle relaxants.

Examples in medicines and products that can affect clotting and bleeding:

- warfarin (Coumadin®)
- anticoagulants such as apixaban (Eliquis®), rivaroxaban (Xarelto®), edoxaban (Lixiana®), dabigatran(Pradaxa®)
- anti-inflammatory and pain relief medicines such as ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®, Naprosyn®)
- medicines that contain aspirin (Alka Seltzer®, Anacin®, Aspergum)
- supplements and herbal products such as feverfew, fish oil, omega-3 fatty acids, garlic, ginger, ginkgo biloba

## What should I watch for?

Most people who take clopidogrel do not notice any side effects but they are possible.

Side effects to watch for:

- unusual bleeding or bruising from cuts and minor injuries
- unusually heavy monthly or menstrual bleeding
- feeling dizzy
- feeling sick to your stomach (nausea)
- headache
- diarrhea
- skin rash or itching (hives)

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if any of these side effects bother you, don't go away, or get worse.

**Get medical care right away** if any of these happen:

- nose bleed that does not stop or slow down with pressure
- new swelling of the lips, face, tongue, or throat
- coughing up or throwing up blood or brown material that looks like coffee grounds
- bloody or black, tar-like stools (poops)
- blood red or brown urine (pee)



**Call 9-1-1** if any of these happen:

- trouble breathing
- chest tightness that is new or does not ease with nitroglycerin
- signs of stroke - facial drooping, arm weakness, slurred speech



If you have any questions about this medicine:

- Ask your pharmacist.
- Ask your doctor.
- Call HealthLinkBC. **8-1-1** or TTY 7-1-1

Speak to a nurse any time, a pharmacist after hours, or a dietitian on weekdays.

HealthLinkBC is open 24 hours. Available in 130 languages. For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.

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