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PSYCHIATRY

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PATIENT EDUCATION

Clonidine

Immediate-release / Extended-release / Weekly patch formulations

A guide for adults taking clonidine.
Follow the directions on your prescription and your provider's recommendations.

DO NOT STOP SUDDENLY | CHECK YOUR EXACT FORMULATION

Formulations: Immediate-release tablets, extended-release formulations, and a weekly blood-pressure patch have different instructions. Do not exchange them milligram for milligram.

What it is used for

Clonidine treats high blood pressure. Certain extended-release formulations are approved for ADHD in children and adolescents; adult psychiatric use for ADHD, hyperarousal, tics, or sleep symptoms is generally off-label.

How it works

It stimulates alpha-2 receptors, reducing sympathetic nervous-system signaling. This can lower blood pressure and pulse and affect attention, arousal, and sleepiness.

What to expect over time

Blood pressure and sedation can change early. Attention or hyperarousal benefits may take longer to assess as the dose is adjusted.

Taking your medication

- Take consistently as prescribed. Swallow ER tablets whole; do not cut, crush, or chew.
- For a missed ER tablet dose, skip it and take the next scheduled dose. Do not double. Other formulations have their own instructions.
- Do not stop suddenly or let your supply run out. Contact your provider after multiple missed doses.
- If using a patch, follow removal, replacement, skin-care, and disposal directions.

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CLONIDINE / 02

Side effects and safety

Possible side effects

- Sleepiness, fatigue, or dizziness
- Dry mouth or constipation
- Low blood pressure or a slow pulse

Keeping track of treatment

Some side effects resolve with time; others may require a change of medication. Discuss persistent or bothersome side effects with your provider.

Have blood pressure and pulse checked before starting, after increases, and periodically. Report faintness, falls, or excessive daytime sleepiness.

If you take too much

For a suspected overdose, call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222** immediately, even if you feel well. Call 911 for a seizure, collapse, trouble breathing, or inability to wake.

Before you start

Discuss low blood pressure, slow pulse, heart block, fainting, kidney disease, and dehydration risk.

Discuss pregnancy, pregnancy plans, and breastfeeding with your provider. Treatment decisions should consider both the medication and the condition being treated.

Medicines and interactions

Review all your medications with your provider, including over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Have new medications checked before taking them.

Beta-blockers and other heart-rate or blood-pressure medicines need coordinated management. The order of stopping medicines can matter.

Alcohol, opioids, sleeping pills, and sedating antihistamines increase impairment. Tricyclic antidepressants may alter the blood-pressure effect.

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Living with your treatment

When to get help

Emergency symptoms. Get emergency care for fainting with a very slow pulse, severe breathing problems, or a severe headache with chest pain or neurologic symptoms after missed doses.

Prompt medical advice. Contact your provider promptly after repeated missed doses or for persistent dizziness. Sudden withdrawal can cause a dangerous rise in blood pressure.

If you feel unsafe or have thoughts of self-harm, call 911 or go to an emergency department.

Your questions answered

Can I stop because my blood pressure is normal?
No. A normal reading may reflect the medication's effect. Consult with your provider for a gradual reduction when appropriate.

Is the patch an ADHD substitute?
Not automatically. Its approved purpose and delivery differ from oral ADHD formulations. A switch needs a specific plan.

Everyday tips

Plan refills early and keep a dose record.

Stand up slowly and avoid dehydration or overheating.

Storage and safety

Keep medication in its labeled container, away from excess heat and moisture and out of reach of children and pets. Do not share it. Ask a pharmacy about disposal of unused medication.

Sources

DailyMed: Clonidine extended-release prescribing information

Educational handout; does not replace your prescription or provider's recommendations.