

Medication Information

Clozaril

Clozaril (clozapine) is a unique antipsychotic medication for patients with treatment-resistant schizophrenia (those who have not responded well to standard drugs or who have had intolerable side effects). The usual daily dose is between 100 and 900 mg.

What are the benefits? Clozaril is effective in about 60 percent of these patients. It also does not generally cause the muscle spasms, cramps, posturing, or other abnormal movement seen with some other antipsychotic medications.

What are the risks? 1-2% of patients taking Clozaril will develop a condition called agranulocytosis, in which the white blood cell count drops dramatically and the patient becomes vulnerable to infections. This condition is dangerous and potentially fatal. Fortunately, it can be successfully treated in most patients by stopping the medication. To maintain safety, the patient's white blood cell count must be checked every week for the first six months, every two weeks for the next six months, and every four weeks thereafter. Also, seizures may occur in 1-5% of patients, more likely at higher doses. Marked weight gain has occurred in some patients, and this may be associated with the development of hyperlipidemia and/or diabetes mellitus.

Common side effects include: drooling, lethargy, drowsiness, and others not listed here. Contact your physician if you develop any unusual or disturbing symptoms.

Alternatives: Some patients with resistant schizophrenia will improve on combinations of various other antipsychotic medications. If left untreated, Schizophrenia tends to become worse and more disabling with time.