Antipsychotic Medications - Clozapine

Specific medications:
Clozapine (Clozaril, Fazaclo)

Use:
• Decrease auditory and visual hallucinations (voices and visions)
• Improve concentration and organizing your thoughts
• Decrease frightening thoughts and unusual beliefs or worries
• Decrease agitation and improve sleep

Risks and side effects:
• Sedation, fatigue, drowsiness
• Increased appetite, weight gain
• Increased risk of diabetes, high cholesterol and lipids, heart disease
• Irregular heartbeat, cardiomyopathy, myocarditis
• Muscle spasms, trouble swallowing
• Shakiness and tremor
• Excessive salivation, drooling
• Increased risk of seizures
• Increased risk of heat stroke
• Severe constipation, paralysis of the bowel
• Loss of bladder control
• Tardive dyskinesia: muscle tics and twitches
• Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome (NMS): a rare but emergent condition with rigid muscles, fever, agitation, and confusion
• Decreased white blood cell count
• Increased risk of stroke, heart problems, and lung problems in elderly people who have Alzheimer’s dementia

Though most side effects are not dangerous, they can rarely be medically serious or even life threatening. Let your doctor know if you notice any changes in your health.

Expected onset of action: Many people feel calmer or sleepy within 30 minutes to an hour after taking the medication. Because of this, you should not take the medication before you drive or do other activities that require you to be alert in order to be safe. It usually takes 1-2 weeks before the medication begins to decrease hallucinations and other psychiatric symptoms.

Use in pregnancy: The effect of this medication on the developing baby are not known. Use birth control while taking this medication and let your doctor know if you may be or wish to become pregnant.

Interactions with other drugs and food: Street drugs and alcohol should be avoided while taking clozapine. Some antidepressant medications, such as fluvoxamine (Luvox) or paroxetine (Paxil), can interact with clozapine and increase its blood level. Clozapine should not be taken with other medications that decrease white blood cell count, such as carbamazepine (Tegretol).

Laboratory monitoring: When people begin treatment with clozapine, they have to have their white blood cell count checked weekly. Over a period of months, this can be decreased to once every two weeks, and then to once monthly. People taking these medications should have their blood sugar, cholesterol, and lipids (blood fats) monitored with a blood test every 6 months. Your doctor may ask you to check your EKG annually.

Discontinuation effects: If this medication is stopped suddenly, you may experience anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, or increased hallucinations for a period of several days to 2 weeks. This can be avoided by tapering the medication slowly.

I acknowledge that I have discussed this information with my doctor and have received a copy of this form for my records.

Individual Served: ___________________________ Date: __________________

Physician: ___________________________ Date: __________________

[ ] Copy given for guardian