

PRIMAQUINE PHOSPHATE

Other NAMES: Primaquine

WHY is this drug prescribed?

Primaquine is an antibiotic used to treat different types of infections.

It can be given in combination with clindamycin (Dalacin® C) for the treatment of *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP). This combination is usually used for people who have experienced adverse effects to sulfa drugs such as trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (TMP/SMX, Bactrim®, Septra®) or dapsone. This combination is a safe and effective alternative.

It can also be given for the treatment of parasitic infections such as malaria.

HOW should this drug be taken?

Primaquine is available as 15 mg tablets. For the treatment of PCP, the usual recommended dose is 15 to 30 mg once daily for 21 days.

Your dosage is:

15 mg tablet

____ tablet(____mg) once a day

Primaquine may be taken with or without food. You may take primaquine with food to avoid an upset stomach.

What should you do if you FORGET a dose?

If you miss a dose of primaquine, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is time for your next dose, do not double the dose, just carry on with your regular schedule.

Why should you not forget to take this drug?

If you miss doses of primaquine, your infection may continue or worsen. In such a situation, you may need to take other drugs. Therefore, it is extremely important that you take primaquine for the entire duration of the treatment.

What ADVERSE EFFECTS can this drug cause? What should you do about them?

Primaquine is generally well tolerated. Occasionally, this drug may cause **nausea, vomiting, upset stomach, loss of appetite, and abdominal cramps**. If these symptoms appear and are bothersome, please inform your doctor or pharmacist.

Primaquine can also cause a variety of adverse effects most having to do with blood. The most serious of these are **hemolytic anemia** (the breakdown of red blood cells) and **methemoglobinemia** (an increase in

the form of hemoglobin that cannot carry oxygen). These effects are related to the amount of primaquine taken and to persons who may already be experiencing low red blood cell levels.

Rarely, primaquine may cause **leukopenia** (a decrease in your white blood cells which are necessary to help fight bacterial infections).

To ensure that you do not develop these adverse effects, it is important that you come to your regular blood tests. Please notify your doctor if you develop the following symptoms: **fatigue, weakness, shortness of breath, rapid heartbeat, dark- coloured urine, fever or chills**.

It is important that you keep your doctor appointments and come for your laboratory tests so that your progress can be followed.

What other PRECAUTIONS should you follow while using this drug?

Before starting primaquine, it is important to inform your doctor if you have or have had in the past any allergies to primaquine, blood disorders, lupus (systemic lupus erythematosus – SLE), or rheumatoid arthritis.

A deficiency of glucose – 6 – phosphate dehydrogenase or NADH-methemoglobin reductase may make you more susceptible to the blood disorders described above. Contact your doctor if you are deficient in these

enzymes. Also, inform your doctor if you have close relatives who have had blood disorders such as hemolytic anemia or favism.

The safety of primaquine has not been established during pregnancy or breastfeeding. In general, primaquine should NOT be given if you are pregnant and breastfeeding is NOT recommended. Please discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist if this is a concern.

Other drugs may affect the way primaquine works and may increase the chance of developing adverse effects. Also, primaquine may affect the way other drugs work. Inform your doctor and pharmacist of all prescribed and non-prescribed drugs you are taking. As well, you should inform them of natural products you are taking. If you wish to start a new drug or natural product, please consult with your pharmacist before doing so.

How should this drug be STORED?

Primaquine tablets should be stored in a cool (15 to 30°C) dry place, protected from light and well out of the reach of children. Ensure that the drug has not expired by checking the expiry date ("EXP") shown on the outside of the package.

Do not store in your bathroom or kitchen, as heat and moisture may cause the drug to be less active.

If you have any questions or concerns about this drug or if you are experiencing adverse effects, please discuss them with your pharmacist, doctor or nurse.

Write questions or concerns down to ensure they are addressed.

The following pharmacist is available to answer questions:

Pharmacist: _____

Telephone: _____

Reference: Product Monograph Primaquine (primaquine phosphate). Markham, ON, Canada: Sanofi-Aventis Canada Inc., 2006. Prepared by the Ontario HIV Pharmacy Professional Specialty Group, 2003. Reviewed 2009.

Additional medication fact sheets and updates may be found at: www.hivclinic.ca

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MEDICATION

FACT SHEET