



Clonazepam

(Pronounced clo-naz-ee-pam)

Why has clonazepam been prescribed?

Clonazepam is an anticonvulsant used to treat epilepsy. Clonazepam is also sometimes prescribed to treat anxiety and a variety of other conditions.

What are the benefits of taking clonazepam?

Clonazepam works quickly (in less than 30 minutes) to relieve agitation.

Are there any precautions with clonazepam?

Clonazepam is suitable for most people. As with all medicines, however, there are precautions. Your prescriber will usually check that it is safe to prescribe clonazepam, but let your prescriber know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- If you have myasthenia gravis, sleep apnoea syndrome, porphyria, cerebellar ataxia, severe lung disease, respiratory failure, kidney trouble or suffer from severe liver trouble.
- If you are taking any other medication, especially cimetidine, sedative antihistamines, antibiotics such as rifampicin, medication for schizophrenia and Parkinson's disease, medication for anxiety or insomnia, antidepressants, anticonvulsants or strong pain killers. Also, tell your prescriber if you buy any medicine 'over the counter' from a pharmacy or supermarket. Please also tell your prescriber if you take any alternative or complementary medicine such as Chinese herbal medicines. St John's wort should not be taken by patients prescribed clonazepam.
- If you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.
- If you have lactose intolerance as the tablets contains lactose (but the liquid does not contain lactose).

What is the usual dose of clonazepam?

The usual dose is between 1mg and 8mg a day. This may be lower in older people.

How should clonazepam be taken?

Clonazepam is usually taken in three to four divided doses throughout the day. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine in another way.

What form does clonazepam come in?

Clonazepam is available as tablets and liquid. The tablets are available as 0.5mg and 2mg. The solution is available in strengths of 0.5mg per 5ml and 2mg per 5ml. Clonazepam is also available in the form of injection.

What should be done if a dose is missed?

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you miss a whole day's dose – just carry on as normal with the next due dose.

What will happen when clonazepam is first taken?

Clonazepam should start to work quite quickly, usually within 30 minutes. Many people do not experience any side effects. However some people may experience some side effects. We have listed potential side effects in the table below, whether or not they are likely to be short or long-term and what measures can be taken is also described. There are other

possible side effects – we have listed only the most important ones. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect. Further information on side effects is available in the official manufacturer’s leaflet.

Reporting side effects

The ‘Yellow Card’ scheme encourages patients to report any side effects that they feel may be caused by their medication. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse for the forms if you wish to report any side effects. Alternatively, telephone 0808 100 3352 or go to www.mhra.gov.uk.

Is clonazepam addictive?

Clonazepam may be addictive if it is taken continually for extended periods or at high doses. There may also be a risk that tolerance develops. Tolerance means that higher doses are needed to achieve the same effect. If you stop taking the medicine suddenly, you may experience unpleasant physical feelings. Symptoms usually only occur after extended use and can include problems sleeping, anxiety, sweating, headache, palpitations and panic attacks. Reducing the dose of clonazepam slowly may make these symptoms less severe.

What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking clonazepam should not drink alcohol. This is because both clonazepam and alcohol can cause drowsiness. If the two are taken together, severe drowsiness can result. This can lead to falls and accidents. As well as this, drinking alcohol may make anxiety worse. Never drink alcohol and drive. Discuss any concerns you have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

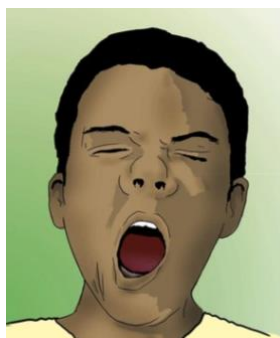
Is it OK to stop taking clonazepam when symptoms go away?

If taken for seizures clonazepam should not be stopped except on the advice of a prescriber. In anxiety clonazepam should be taken only for short periods - ideally for less than four weeks. Other methods of dealing with anxiety may also be tried. These include relaxation techniques and psychological therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy. You should always discuss with your prescriber any plans you have to reduce or stop any of your prescribed medicines.

Are there any alternatives to clonazepam?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Although anxiolytic drugs have broadly similar therapeutic effects they differ in the side effects they produce. There are other treatments for anxiety available so most people can find one which suits them. Psychological and practical therapies can also help in some people with anxiety, either as an alternative to medication or alongside it.

Summary of side effects



Drowsiness – Common (the morning after)

What can be done about it?

Do not drive if you are drowsy or dizzy. This may wear off in time.

Other (less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Muscle weakness	Uncommon Tell your prescriber if you experience muscle weakness.
Dizziness	Uncommon This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Incoordination	Uncommon Tell your prescriber if you experience difficulty coordinating movements.
Confusion	Uncommon Tell your prescriber if you experience confusion.
Amnesia (memory loss)	Uncommon Tell your prescriber if taking clonazepam causes any memory loss.
Sexual dysfunction (impotence and loss of desire)	Rare Tell your prescriber if you experience any change in sexual function.
Increased saliva and lung secretions (infants and small children only)	Rare Children should be watched carefully. Do not give clonazepam if any breathing difficulties occur.
Nausea	Rare This should wear off within a few days but discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Headache	Rare This should wear off within a few days. Paracetamol can be taken but discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Disinhibition (loss of self control and inhibitions)	Rare Tell your prescriber if your behaviour changes in any way.
Depressed mood	Rare Tell your prescriber if taking clonazepam causes any changes in mood, perception, or thinking ability.
Irritability	Rare Tell your prescriber if taking clonazepam causes any changes in mood, perception, or thinking ability.
Aggression	Rare Tell your prescriber if taking clonazepam causes any changes in mood, perception, or thinking ability.
Nightmares	Very rare Tell your prescriber if taking clonazepam causes any changes in mood, perception, or thinking ability.

Anxiety	Very rare Tell your prescriber if taking clonazepam causes any changes in mood, perception, or thinking ability.
Skin colour changes	Very rare Tell your prescriber if you experience any change in skin colour.
Rash	Very rare Tell the prescriber straightaway if any rash develops.
Blood disorders	Very rare Any sore throat, fever, bruising or nose bleeds should be reported to your prescriber immediately

Very common = almost everyone affected
Common = many people affected
Uncommon = some people affected

Rare = few people affected
Very rare = very few or no one affected

Disclaimer

This leaflet does not replace the official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet.

For more information, visit www.slam.nhs.uk/meds or speak to a health care professional.

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