

Appendix 2

PATIENT AND CARER INFORMATION SHEET: Drug Treatments for Dementia

This leaflet aims to summarise the key information regarding drug treatments for memory problems. Your Specialist Doctor or Community Nurse will have already discussed the medications with you. If you have any further questions or concerns your key worker would be very happy to address them.

Aims of drug treatment

The treatments are available for those with a diagnosis of either Alzheimer's dementia or Mixed dementia. They may also benefit patients with a diagnosis of Lewy Body dementia.

The effect of the drug will vary for different people. Some people may find their condition improves or stabilises over time. The main benefits tend to be within memory and thinking abilities. Other benefits may include improvement in mood, ability to cope in general, and ability to carry out daily activities. There is evidence that for some people the medication may delay or slow the memory loss over time resulting in the person remaining as independent for as long as possible. Some people may not notice any effect.

How the medication works

The brain uses chemicals to carry messages between brain cells. The treatments help to increase the amount of these chemicals in the brain, in order to improve memory and thinking.

Types of drugs available

There are 4 main drugs available:

Donepezil (Aricept) - Once a day tablet, taken morning or night

Rivastigmine (Exelon) - Twice a day tablet, or patch applied once per day

Galantamine (Reminyl) - Either once or twice a day tablet

Memantine (Ebixa) - Once a day tablet, taken in the morning

Taking your medication

Your specialist doctor or nurse will arrange for a prescription through your own GP. Normally you will start on a low dose initially, to ensure there are no side effects. After a month the dose will usually be increased. After 3 months your doctor or nurse will review your progress, which will include a discussion with your relative or carer.

If you wish to stop the medication for any reason, please contact your specialist doctor or nurse to discuss it. This is because after the drug is stopped, you may lose the benefit that the medication has previously given you. For this reason, we advise that people remain on the treatments long term.

How to take them

It is important that you take the medications every day, as directed on the box or blister pack. If a dose is missed, it should be taken as soon as you remember if it is the same day. If it is the next day, do not take an extra dose, but continue as normal. Some people find it helpful to have a carer or relative to remind them to take their medication

Possible side effects

The majority of people have no problems taking this medication. As with any medication, there is a small risk you may experience some side effects. These may include

- feeling sick (nausea)
- vomiting or diarrhoea
- headaches
- difficulty passing water
- difficulty getting to sleep, or bad dreams

Often, these side effects will pass after a few days. If not, contact your specialist doctor or nurse for advice. It may be that a different medication would suit you better.

If you have previously suffered stomach ulcers, certain heart problems or serious breathing problems, the drugs may not be suitable for you. Your doctor will have considered these issues before prescribing the medication.

Useful contacts

If you need any advice or further information regarding your treatment, contact your key-worker on the following number:

Mental Health Older Adults Team

01896827105 (Central and West) /01573226760(East and South)

Further information can also be found at: www.alzscot.org

Medicine specific information can be found at: <https://www.choiceandmedication.org/nhs24>