



Waitematā
District Health Board

Best Care for Everyone

Clozapine and caring for your gut

What you need to know

Important contacts

My family doctor/general practitioner (GP)

Name



My mental health clinician

Name



After-hours crisis team number:

Dial 111 in case of an emergency. Take this booklet with you when you see your GP or if you go to the Emergency Department (ED).

About this booklet

Constipation is a very common side effect of clozapine and can affect up to six in every 10 people who take it. This can be very uncomfortable and, if not treated, can lead to serious bowel damage. **Early treatment for constipation is very important.**

This booklet is a tool you can use to monitor for constipation. You can bring it with you to your doctor's appointments so that your doctor can recommend the best treatment.

What is constipation?

Constipation is when your bowel movements (stool or *poos*) become hard and lumpy, making them painful or difficult to get out. It is a common problem.

These symptoms may mean you have constipation:

- changes in how often you have a bowel motion
- finding it difficult to pass a bowel motion
- stools are hard or lumpy
- gas, wind, bloating, or stomach cramps, pain or discomfort
- not completely emptying your bowel
- feeling like something is blocking your bowel
- needing to pee a lot more often than usual
- burning around your anus
- difficulty swallowing
- acid reflux
- oozy, liquid stools that look like diarrhea. Severe constipation can cause a blockage in your bowel. Because of this, the bowel begins to leak out watery stools around the blockage from higher up in the bowel. This is also called 'overflow diarrhea'.

You can prevent constipation by increasing the fluid and fibre intake in your diet and exercising regularly. You may also need to take laxatives.

If you have problems with constipation before starting clozapine, tell your doctor. You will be started on a laxative when you start taking clozapine.

Constipation action plan

GREEN ZONE Doing well

- You are passing soft, comfortable stools.
- There are no other symptoms listed on page 2 that suggest you may have constipation.
- You can continue with your medicines as prescribed by your doctor.
- Remember to maintain your fluid and fibre intake and exercise regularly.

YELLOW ZONE Constipation worsening

See your doctor/GP if you have:






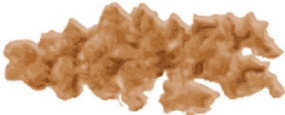

- not passed stools for two days
- stools are hard and difficult to pass
- noticed any other symptoms listed on page 2 that may mean you have constipation
- Your doctor may need to give you extra laxatives, do a further physical exam and see you more regularly.

RED ZONE Medical alert!

You need to see your doctor **IMMEDIATELY** if you experience:

- worsening stomach or tummy pain or cramp
- bloating or gas in your tummy
- tummy looks bigger or more distended
- diarrhoea (runny stools) especially if this is bloody
- fever, feeling sick (nausea), being sick (vomiting), drowsiness
- very bad breath
- **If you cannot see your GP on the same day, go to your local hospital Emergency Department.**

Bristol Stool Chart

Type 1		Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
Type 2		Sausage-shaped but lumpy
Type 3		Like a sausage but with cracks on its surface
Type 4		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
Type 5		Soft blobs with clear-cut edges, a mushy stool
Type 6		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
Type 7		Watery, no solid pieces. Entirely liquid

Bristol Stool Chart

The Bristol Stool Chart shows 7 types of stool. Every person will have different bowel habits, but the important thing is that your stools are soft and easy to pass – like types 3 and 4.

- Types 1 and 2 indicate constipation
- Types 3 and 4 are ideal stools as they are easier to pass
- Types 5, 6 and 7 may mean diarrhea

Bowel movement monthly record

For each time you pass stools, record the following:

- **size** of the stool passed – small, medium or large
- **type** – number 1-7 according to the Bristol Stool Chart on page 4.

If you did not pass stools on a particular date, mark on the record with an **X**. A sample record is as below.

MONTH/YEAR June 2020

<i>Date</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>
Stool #1	<i>S1</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>S3</i>	<i>S3</i>	<i>M4</i>	<i>M4</i>
Stool #2	<i>S1</i>									
Stool #3	<i>S1</i>									

Notes/comments e.g. any added treatment for constipation prescribed and on what date

6 June 2020 – my GP advised I take an extra Laxsol tablet in the morning.

MONTH/YEAR _____

Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Stool #1											
Stool #2											
Stool #3											

Notes/comments (e.g. any added treatment and date for constipation)

MONTH/YEAR _____

Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Stool #1											
Stool #2											
Stool #3											

Notes/comments (e.g. any added treatment and date for constipation)

MONTH/YEAR _____

Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Stool #1											
Stool #2											
Stool #3											

Notes/comments (e.g. any added treatment and date for constipation)

MONTH/YEAR _____

Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Stool #1											
Stool #2											
Stool #3											

Notes/comments (e.g. any added treatment and date for constipation)

MONTH/YEAR _____

Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Stool #1											
Stool #2											
Stool #3											

Notes/comments (e.g. any added treatment and date for constipation)

MONTH/YEAR _____

Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Stool #1										
Stool #2										
Stool #3										

Date	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Stool #1											
Stool #2											
Stool #3											

Notes/comments (e.g. any added treatment and date for constipation)

References

BPACNZ. Clozapine: safe prescribing. September 2017.

Every-Palmer, S. The Porirua Protocol: Guidance to prevent clozapine-related constipation. 2014

Health Navigator. Clozapine information.

<https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/medicines/c/clozapine/>

Waitematā DHB. Clozapine Best Practice Guidelines. 2019



Waitematā
District Health Board

Best Care for Everyone