

# DONEPEZIL

**Brand name** Aricept

**Used in the following combined preparations** None

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Donepezil is an inhibitor of the enzyme acetylcholinesterase. This enzyme breaks down the natural neurotransmitter acetylcholine to limit its effects. Blocking the enzyme raises levels of acetylcholine, which, in the brain, increases awareness and memory. Donepezil has been found to improve the symptoms of dementia in Alzheimer's disease and is used to diminish deterioration in that disease. It is not currently recommended for

dementia due to other causes. Treatment with donepezil is initiated under specialist supervision. It is usual to assess those being treated at six monthly intervals to decide whether the drug is helping.

Side effects may include bladder outflow obstruction and psychiatric problems, such as agitation and aggression, which might be due to the disease.

## QUICK REFERENCE

**Drug group** Drug for dementia (p.43)

**Overdose danger rating** Medium

**Dependence rating** Low

**Prescription needed** Yes

**Available as generic** Yes

## INFORMATION FOR USERS

**Your drug prescription is tailored for you. Do not alter dosage without checking with your doctor.**

### How taken/used



Tablets.

### Frequency and timing of doses

Once daily at bedtime.

### Adult dosage range

5–10mg.

### Onset of effect

1 hour. Full effects may take up to 3 months.

### Duration of action

Usually 1–2 days.

### Diet advice

None.

### Storage

Keep in original container at room temperature out of the reach of children.

### Missed dose

Take as soon as you remember. A carer should ensure that the maximum dose taken in 24 hours does not exceed 10mg.

### Stopping the drug

Do not stop taking the drug without consulting your doctor; symptoms may recur.

### Exceeding the dose

An occasional unintentional extra dose is unlikely to be a cause for concern. But if you notice any unusual symptoms, or if a large overdose has been taken, notify your doctor.

## SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

### Be sure to tell your doctor if:

- You have liver or kidney problems.
- You have a heart problem.
- You have asthma or respiratory problems.
- You have had a gastric or duodenal ulcer.
- You are taking an NSAID regularly.
- You are taking other medicines.



### Pregnancy

Not recommended. Safety in pregnancy not established.



### Breast-feeding

Not recommended.



### Infants and children

Not recommended.



### Over 60

No special problems.



### Driving and hazardous work

Your underlying condition may make such activities inadvisable. Discuss with your doctor.



### Alcohol

Avoid. Alcohol may reduce the effect of donepezil.

### Surgery and general anaesthetics

Treatment with donepezil may need to be stopped before you have a general anaesthetic. Discuss this with your doctor or dentist before any operation.

## POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS

Adverse effects include such problems as accidents, which are common in this group

of people even when not treated.

Symptom/effect	Frequency		Discuss with doctor		Stop taking drug now	Call doctor now
	Common	Rare	Only if severe	In all cases		
Nausea/vomiting	●		●			
Diarrhoea	●		●			
Fatigue/insomnia	●		●			
Muscle cramps	●		●			
Urinary incontinence	●			●		
Headache		●	●			
Fainting/dizziness		●		●		
Palpitations		●		●		
Difficulty in passing urine		●		●		
Seizures		●		●	●	●

## INTERACTIONS

### Muscle relaxants used in surgery

Donepezil may increase the effect of some muscle relaxants, but it may also block some others.

**Fluoxetine, erythromycin and ketoconazole** can increase the levels and adverse effects of donepezil.

## PROLONGED USE

May be continued for as long as there is benefit. Stopping the drug leads to a gradual loss of the improvements over several weeks.

**Monitoring** Periodic checks should be carried out at 6-monthly intervals to test whether the drug is still providing some benefit.