

**REVIEWED***By Chris Tighe at 10:08 am, Jan 04, 2018*

# Plaquenil

**Generic Name:** hydroxychloroquine (hye drox ee KLOR oh kwin)

**Brand Names:** *Plaquenil*, *Quineprox*

## What is Plaquenil?

Plaquenil (hydroxychloroquine) belongs to a group of medicines called **quinolines**.

Plaquenil is used to treat or prevent **malaria**, a disease caused by parasites that enter the body through the bite of a mosquito. Malaria is common in areas such as Africa, South America, and Southern Asia. This medicine is not effective against all strains of malaria.

Plaquenil is also an **antirheumatic medicine** and is used to treat symptoms of **rheumatoid arthritis** and discoid or systemic lupus erythematosus.

## Important information

Taking Plaquenil long-term or at high doses may cause irreversible damage to the retina of your eye. **Stop taking Plaquenil and call your doctor at once if you have** trouble focusing, if you see light streaks or flashes in your vision, or if you notice any swelling or color changes in your eyes.

Before using Plaquenil, tell your doctor if you are allergic to any drugs, or if you have psoriasis, porphyria, liver disease, alcoholism, or glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G-6-PD) deficiency.

Take Plaquenil for the full prescribed length of time for malaria. Your symptoms may improve before the infection is completely cleared.

When treating lupus or arthritis, tell your doctor if your symptoms do not improve after 6 months of treatment.

## Before taking this medicine

You should not use Plaquenil if you are allergic to hydroxychloroquine.

Plaquenil should not be used for long-term treatment in children.

To make sure Plaquenil is safe for you, tell your doctor if you have:

- a history of vision changes or damage to your retina caused by an anti-malaria medication;
- heart disease, heart rhythm disorder (such as long QT syndrome);
- diabetes;
- a stomach disorder;
- an allergy to quinine;
- liver or kidney disease;

- psoriasis;
- alcoholism; or
- a genetic enzyme disorder such as porphyria or glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency.

It is not known whether Plaquenil will harm an unborn baby. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.

**Malaria is more likely to cause death in a pregnant woman.** If you are pregnant, talk with your doctor about the risks of traveling to areas where malaria is common.

It is not known whether hydroxychloroquine passes into breast milk or if it could harm a nursing baby. Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding a baby.

Plaquenil is not approved for use by anyone younger than 18 years old.

## How should I take Plaquenil?

Take Plaquenil exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Follow all directions on your prescription label. Do not take this medicine in larger or smaller amounts or for longer than recommended. Plaquenil is sometimes given only once per week. Choose the same day each week to take this medicine if you are on a weekly dosing schedule.

Take Plaquenil with a meal or a glass of milk.

**To prevent malaria:** Start taking Plaquenil 2 weeks before entering an area where malaria is common. Continue taking the medicine regularly during your stay and for at least 8 weeks after you leave the area.

**To treat malaria:** Plaquenil is usually given for 3 days, starting with one high dose followed by a smaller dose during the next 2 days in a row.

Take Plaquenil for the full prescribed length of time for malaria. Your symptoms may improve before the infection is completely cleared.

Use protective clothing, insect repellents, and mosquito netting around your bed to further prevent mosquito bites that could cause malaria.

Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have been exposed to malaria, or if you have fever or other symptoms of illness during or after a stay in an area where malaria is common.

No medication is 100% effective in treating or preventing all types of malaria. For best results, keep using the medication as directed. Talk with your doctor if you have fever, vomiting, or diarrhea during your treatment.

When treating lupus or arthritis, Plaquenil is usually given daily for several weeks or months. For best results, keep using the medication as directed. Talk with your doctor if your symptoms do not improve after 6 months of treatment.

While using Plaquenil, you may need frequent blood tests and vision exams.

Store at room temperature away from moisture, heat, and light.

## What happens if I miss a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. Skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your next scheduled dose. Do not take extra medicine to make up the missed dose.

## What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention or call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222. **An overdose of hydroxychloroquine can be fatal, especially in children.**

Plaquenil overdose must be treated quickly. You may be told to induce vomiting right away (at home, before transport to an emergency room). Ask the poison control center how to induce vomiting in the case of an overdose.

Overdose symptoms may include drowsiness, vision changes, slow heart rate, chest pain, severe dizziness, seizure (convulsions), or shallow breathing.

## What should I avoid while taking Plaquenil?

Avoid taking an antacid or Kaopectate (kaolin-pectin) within 4 hours before or after you take hydroxychloroquine. Some antacids can make it harder for your body to absorb hydroxychloroquine.

## Plaquenil side effects

Get emergency medical help if you have **signs of an allergic reaction to Plaquenil**: hives; difficulty breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Taking Plaquenil long-term or at high doses may cause irreversible damage to the retina of your eye. **Stop taking Plaquenil and call your doctor at once if you have** trouble focusing, if you see light streaks or flashes in your vision, or if you notice any swelling or color changes in your eyes.

Call your doctor at once if you have:

- headache with chest pain and severe dizziness, fainting, fast or pounding heartbeats;
- very slow heart rate, weak pulse;
- muscle weakness, numbness or tingling;
- **low blood sugar** - headache, hunger, sweating, irritability, dizziness, nausea, fast heart rate, and feeling anxious or shaky; or
- **low blood cell counts** - fever, chills, sore throat, weakness or ill feeling, swollen gums, mouth sores, skin sores, rapid heart rate, pale skin, easy bruising, unusual bleeding, feeling light-headed.

Common Plaquenil side effects may include:

- headache, dizziness, ringing in your ears;
- nausea, vomiting, stomach pain;
- loss of appetite, weight loss;
- mood changes, feeling nervous or irritable;
- skin rash or itching; or
- hair loss.

This is not a complete list of side effects and others may occur. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

## Plaquenil dosing information

### Usual Adult Dose of Plaquenil for Malaria:

Treatment of the acute attack: 800 mg (620 mg base) followed in 6 to 8 hours by 400 mg (310 mg base), then 400 mg (310 mg base) once a day for 2 consecutive days; alternatively, a single dose of 800 mg (620 mg base) has also been effective

Dosage on the basis of body weight:

First dose: 10 mg base/kg (not to exceed 620 mg base)

Second dose: 5 mg base/kg (not to exceed 310 mg base) 6 hours after first dose

Third dose: 5 mg base/kg 18 hours after second dose

Fourth dose: 5 mg base/kg 24 hours after third dose

Each dose should be taken with a meal or a glass of milk.

Concomitant therapy with an 8-aminoquinoline drug is necessary for the radical cure of vivax and malariae malaria.

### Usual Adult Dose of Plaquenil for Malaria Prophylaxis:

Suppression: 400 mg (310 mg base) orally on the same day every week

Suppressive therapy should begin 2 weeks prior to exposure; however, failing this, an initial dose of 800 mg (620 mg base) may be taken in 2 divided doses (6 hours apart). Suppressive therapy should continue for 8 weeks after leaving the endemic area.

Each dose should be taken with a meal or a glass of milk.

### Usual Adult Dose of Plaquenil for Rheumatoid Arthritis:

Initial dose: 400 to 600 mg (310 to 465 mg base) orally once a day

Maintenance dose: 200 to 400 mg (155 to 310 mg base) orally once a day

Each dose should be taken with a meal or a glass of milk.

### Usual Adult Dose for Systemic Lupus Erythematosus:

Discoid and systemic lupus erythematosus:

Initial dose: 400 mg (310 mg base) orally once or twice a day for several weeks or months, depending on patient response

Maintenance dose: 200 to 400 mg (155 to 310 mg base) orally once a day

Each dose should be taken with a meal or a glass of milk.

### Usual Pediatric Dose for Malaria:

Treatment of the acute attack:

1 year or older:

First dose: 10 mg base/kg (not to exceed 620 mg base)

Second dose: 5 mg base/kg (not to exceed 310 mg base) 6 hours after first dose

Third dose: 5 mg base/kg 18 hours after second dose

Fourth dose: 5 mg base/kg 24 hours after third dose

Each dose should be taken with a meal or a glass of milk.

Concomitant therapy with an 8-aminoquinoline drug is necessary for the radical cure of vivax and malariae malaria.

#### **Usual Pediatric Dose for Malaria Prophylaxis:**

Suppression:

1 year or older: 5 mg base/kg of body weight (not to exceed 310 mg base) orally on the same day every week

Suppressive therapy should begin 2 weeks prior to exposure; however, failing this, an initial dose of 10 mg base/kg (not to exceed 620 mg base) may be taken in 2 divided doses (6 hours apart). Suppressive therapy should continue for 8 weeks after leaving the endemic area.

Each dose should be taken with a meal or a glass of milk.

#### **Usual Pediatric Dose for Dermatomyositis:**

Case Review (n=25)

Juvenile Dermatomyositis (JDMS):

1.5 to 15 years: 7 mg/kg orally per day (added to first course treatment for JDMS if the patient presented with extensive skin rash and needed steroids in high doses)

Each dose should be taken with a meal or a glass of milk.

## **What other drugs will affect Plaquenil?**

Plaquenil can cause serious liver or heart problems, especially if you use certain medicines at the same time, including:

- other medicines to treat malaria;
- an antibiotic or antifungal medicine;
- antiviral medicine to treat hepatitis or HIV/AIDS;
- antidepressants or antipsychotic medicines;
- birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy;
- cancer medication;
- cholesterol-lowering medication;
- heart or blood pressure medicine;
- pain or arthritis medicines (including aspirin, Tylenol, Advil, and Aleve);
- seizure medication;
- stomach acid reducers; or
- tuberculosis medicine.

This list is not complete and many other drugs can interact with hydroxychloroquine. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products. Not all possible interactions are listed in this medication guide. Tell your doctor about all medicines you use, and those you start or stop using during your treatment with Plaquenil. Give a

list of all your medicines to any healthcare provider who treats you.

## Where can I get more information?

- Your pharmacist can provide more information about Plaquenil.

Remember, keep this and all other medicines out of the reach of children, never share your medicines with others, and use Plaquenil only for the indication prescribed.

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