What is clonidine/Tenex?

Clonidine (Clon-ah-dean) is the generic name for Catapres (Cat-ah-press). Guanfacine (guahn-fah-seen) is the generic name for Tenex (Ten-ex). They are used for treating high blood pressure. They are also used for treating tics, migraines, anxiety, aggression, and ADD.

How is it given?

Tenex is longer acting and less sedating than clonidine. Tenex is given 2 times per day, while clonidine may be taken 3 or more times a day. We usually start with 1/2 tablet at bedtime and increase it, as needed, every week.

Clonidine also comes in as a skin patch. The patch is changed every three to seven days. It releases the medicine slowly through the skin. There are no pills to take when you use a patch. The dose is changed by cutting the patch into smaller pieces.

Sometimes the patch can cause red irritated skin. To prevent this, change the patch more often (perhaps every 2 or 3 days) and move it to a new area on the skin. If the irritation continues, ask your pharmacist for Sween, Alovera or Hydrocortisone cream. Rub it on the skin before putting the patch on. If the patch falls off easily, ask your pharmacist about Tegaderm to put over the patch, in order to keep the patch on.

What are the side effects?

Common side effects include:
- drowsiness
- headaches
- dizziness
- Incoordination
- dry mouth
- Incoordination
- dilated pupils
- nightmares
- heat sensitivity*
- easily sunburned*

*Be sure to drink plenty of fluids, limit sun exposure and wear a sunscreen. To prevent side effects, we start with a low dose and build up. If drowsiness or dizziness continues call us.

Take your medicine on time. If you forget a dose, take it as soon possible. If it is close to the time for your next dose then skip the dose & stay on your regular schedule. Don’t “double-up” on medication to catch up.

Tenex or clonidine may make you drowsy (especially when it is taken with alcohol), be careful when you are doing dangerous activities such as driving.

Except for increased drowsiness, over the counter medicines are usually not a problem when taken with Tenex or clonidine. There are no known long term side effects to them. They are not addictive.

Don't stop clonidine suddenly. Keep all medicine out of the reach of children.

Stopping clonidine suddenly may cause high blood pressure, anxiety, insomnia, restlessness or make behavior problems worse. For children with tics, stopping clonidine may cause his tics to suddenly get worse. We usually taper clonidine slowly. If you have any questions, please call us.

Written by Don Eastmead, M.D. & edited by Drew Eastmead June 2004

Do not use your medicine if it looks different than your usual prescription. Talk to your pharmacist.