

Layton Aging & Alzheimer's Disease Center Medication Fact Sheet

DONEPEZIL Hydrochloride (trade name **ARICEPT®**)

HOW DONEPEZIL WORKS:

Donepezil (Aricept) is believed to work by increasing the concentration of a brain chemical (acetylcholine) that is involved in learning and memory.

While donepezil (Aricept) may improve symptoms in people with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease, it does not cure or stop the progressive decline of the disease.

DOSE AND TREATMENT INFORMATION:

Your healthcare provider will give you donepezil (Aricept) 5 milligrams (mg) a day for four to six weeks. If this works well, you may take a higher dose of 10 milligrams (mg) a day. Starting at a lower dose reduces the chance of nausea and diarrhea.

You take donepezil (Aricept) once a day, generally at bedtime or in the morning.

You may take it with or without food. However, taking donepezil (Aricept) with food reduces the chance of nausea. If you miss a dose take it as soon as possible, unless it is close to the time to take the next daily dose. Do not take a double dose on one day.

WARNINGS:

*If you are to have surgery, be sure to let your doctor or dentist know that you are taking this medication. Donepezil (Aricept) can cause increased muscle relaxation when combined with anesthesia drugs.

*You may be at risk for bradycardia (a slow heart rate) and seizure activity.

*If you take donepezil (Aricept), you should not be taking razadyne (galantamine) or exelon (rivastigmine).

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS and WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT THEM:

Allergic reactions (rash, breathing difficulty):

Stop the medication. Call your healthcare provider or 911.

Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, fatigue:

These effects are often mild and tend to occur more often when the dosage is 10 milligrams (mg) a day rather than 5 milligrams (mg) a day.

Often, these side effects are temporary, lasting one to three weeks, then get better later. These effects may be reduced by taking the medicine with food or eating or drinking something with ginger, such as ginger ale or ginger tea.

Fainting:

Call your healthcare provider.

Sleeping difficulty:

Take medication in the morning. Call your healthcare provider if it remains a problem.

If you have questions or problems, please call 503 494-7615 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.