

# MEDICATIONS FOR ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE



MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
SINGAPORE



Adding years of healthy life



## **ABOUT** your medicine

The class of medicines commonly used to treat Alzheimer's disease is known as cholinesterase inhibitors. They are designed to prevent the breakdown of acetylcholine, a chemical messenger in the brain that is important for memory and other thinking skills. The medicine works to keep levels of this chemical messenger high, even while the cells that produce the messenger continue to become damaged or die. They work most effectively for people who are mildly to moderately affected by the disease.

Medicines in this class include:

- Donepezil
- Rivastigmine
- Galantamine

## **HOW** should I take the medicine?

### **Donepezil**

Donepezil is usually taken once a day in the evening just before bedtime.

### **Rivastigmine & Galatamine**

Take these medicines exactly as your doctor prescribes. The dose may differ for different patients. It is usually taken with meals.

These medicines must be taken regularly every day over a period of time to be effective. It is common for your doctor to start you on a low dose and gradually increase as required.

*Keep all medication out of reach of children  
Discard all medication that has expired or is no longer required*

## **What should I do if I FORGET a dose?**

Take this medicine exactly as directed by your doctor. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember unless it is almost time for the next scheduled dose. In that case, skip the missed dose and take the next one as directed. Do not double the dose to make up for the missed dose.

## **What are the possible SIDE-EFFECTS of the medicine?**

Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, loss of appetite and increased frequency of bowel movements might be expected with any of these medicines. Other side-effects include headache, dizziness, fatigue, malaise and anxiety. Some patients may exhibit an initial increase in agitation but this should subside after the first few weeks of therapy.

## **What PRECAUTIONS should I take?**

These medications may cause drowsiness. Do not drive or operate machinery.

Do not take other medicines unless they have been discussed with your doctor or pharmacist especially non-prescription medicines such as painkillers, e.g. aspirin or ibuprofen and medications for cough and cold.

Tell your doctor about any nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach pain or loss of appetite.

It is very important that you see your doctor for regular visits and report worsening of your condition or if you notice any new symptoms.

## **How should I STORE the medicine?**

Store the medicine in a dry place at room temperature, away from heat and direct light. Do not refrigerate your medicines unless instructed to do so.

