

# Carvedilol for the prevention of variceal bleeding in children with portal hypertension

## Information for parents and carers

This leaflet provides more information about carvedilol, which has been prescribed for your child. If you have any queries or concerns, please speak to the doctor, nurse or pharmacist looking after your child.

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### What is carvedilol used for?

Children with liver disease and portal hypertension (high pressure in the liver blood flow system), often develop varices (enlarged veins) in their oesophagus (food pipe) and their stomach. These varices may bleed and cause more problems. Some children go on to need liver transplantation at some point.

Carvedilol is used to lower the pressure in the liver blood flow system and so help prevent the varices from bleeding.

### How much carvedilol should I give my child?

Your doctor will work out the correct amount (dose) of carvedilol for your child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label. Your doctor may start your child on a low dose and gradually increase it, depending on how they respond to it.

**It is important to give your child the correct dose and to check with your doctor if you are ever unsure.**

### When do I give my child carvedilol?

You usually give them the medication **two times** each day – once in the morning and once in the evening.

Ideally, give them the dose 10 to 12 hours apart. For example, give them the first dose of the day sometime between 7am and 8am, and their second dose between 7pm and 8pm.

Give them the medicine at about the same times each day so it becomes part of your child's daily routine and will help you to remember.

Carvedilol is usually continued if tolerated long term. If your child has a liver transplant then the carvedilol will be stopped.

## How do I give my child carvedilol?

Carvedilol comes as 3.125mg and 6.25mg tablets.

**Taking it with food:** Your child should take the medicine when feeding or with some food. You can crush the tablet and mix it with a small amount of cold or room-temperature soft food such as yogurt, mashed potato or jam. Make sure your child swallows it straight away without chewing.

**Taking part of tablet, with or without water:** Sometimes, the only way to give your child the correct dose is to give them part of a tablet, or to mix a tablet in a small amount of water and give them some of the mixture. Your doctor or pharmacist will let you know if you need to do this and explain what to do. You should only do this if they have told you to do so. Pour any unused mixture into a paper towel and put in the bin. Do not pour it down the sink.

**Nasogastric or gastric feeding:** If your child has a feeding tube, then you can crush the tablet, mix it in sterile water and give it to your child through a nasogastric or gastric feeding tube. Please discuss this with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist before doing so.

## What should I do if my child vomits?

- If your child spits out the dose or vomits less than 30 minutes after being given the carvedilol, give them another dose.
- If they vomit more than 30 minutes after they have been given the carvedilol, **do not** give them a new dose. Give them their next dose at the usual time.

Contact the doctor if they keep spitting out the dose or vomiting after being given carvedilol.

## What should I do if I forget to give the carvedilol?

- If you remember **up to four hours** after you should have given a dose, give your child the missed dose. For example, if you usually give your child a dose at about 7am, you can give the missed dose at any time up to 11am.
- If you remember **more than four hours** after they should have had a dose, do not give your child the missed dose. Give them their next dose as usual.

**Never give a double dose of carvedilol.**

## What are the side effects?

### Side-effects you must do something about

- If your child gets a rash in the first two weeks of taking carvedilol, contact your doctor straight away, as they may be allergic to the medicine. Do not give them any more until you have spoken to your doctor.
- Your child may feel dizzy or lightheaded when they stand up, or they may faint. Encourage them to stand up slowly, and to sit or lie down if they feel dizzy. This is most likely to happen when they start treatment or the dose has been increased; it should get better after a little while. If it happens often, contact your doctor, because your child's blood pressure or blood sugar may be too low.
- Your child may get flu-like symptoms (high temperature, aches and pains, headache), a headache or wheeziness. Contact your doctor straight away if your child develops wheeziness when taking carvedilol, as they may need to stop treatment.
- Your child may feel nauseous (sick), vomit or have diarrhoea. If you have any concerns about the severity of these symptoms, contact your doctor straight away.

### Other side-effects you need to know about

- Your child may get a dry mouth. Eating citrus fruits such as oranges and taking sips of water may help.
- They may get dry or red and itchy eyes, and their eyesight may become blurred.

- Your child may feel depressed and have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Contact your doctor if you have concerns with your child's mood, as the medication may need to be reduced or stopped.
- Your child's sleep may be affected, let your doctor know at your next appointment if this happens.
- Older children and young adults may notice they cannot get an erection (erectile dysfunction). This should get better on reducing or stopping the medication. Please contact your doctor if you have concerns. Do not reduce or stop your medication before discussing with your doctor.

There may sometimes be other side effects not listed here. If you notice anything unusual and are concerned, contact your doctor. You can report suspected side effects to the UK safety scheme at [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard)

### **Does my child need blood tests or other monitoring when taking carvedilol?**

They will need to have a blood test after starting the medicine. The paediatric liver shared care team will arrange to measure your child's blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate and blood sugar. This will also be checked if the dose is increased. Your child will continue to be monitored as usual by the paediatric liver shared care team.

### **Can my child take other medicines with carvedilol?**

You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol, unless your doctor has told you not to.

Carvedilol should not be taken with some medicines that you get on prescription. It is important to tell your doctor and pharmacist about any other medicines your child is taking before giving them carvedilol.

You must also tell your doctor and pharmacist that your child is taking carvedilol before giving any other medicines to them. This includes herbal and complementary medicines.

### **How do I store carvedilol?**

Store it at room temperature, away from direct light and the reach of children. Do not use it after the expiry date, which is shown on the carton after EXP. The expiry date refers to the last day of that month.

### **How do I dispose of carvedilol?**

Ask your pharmacist how to throw away medicines you no longer use. Do not dispose of any medicines down the sink or toilet or in your household waste. This helps to protect the environment.

### **How can you find out more about carvedilol?**

Please ask your child's doctor, pharmacist or nurse for more information.

You can also call King's College Hospital Paediatric Liver Shared Care.

Tel: **020 3299 3774**

### **More information about liver disease and portal hypertension**

Children's Liver Disease Foundation: [childliverdisease.org/](http://childliverdisease.org/)

### **MyChart**

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on **020 3299 4618** or email [kings.mychart@nhs.net](mailto:kings.mychart@nhs.net). To find out more visit [www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart](http://www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart)

## **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: **kings.pals@nhs.net**

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