

What You Should Know About Chloroquine and Hydroxychloroquine

What is it?

Chloroquine (CQ) and hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) are medicines that are often used to treat and prevent malaria, lupus, or rheumatoid arthritis. The use of CQ and HCQ is currently being studied to treat patients with a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case. However, using CQ and HCQ can cause severe poisonings and overdoses if used incorrectly.

Why is it dangerous?

There are severe effects if CQ or HCQ is taken by the wrong person or in the wrong amount. Deaths have been reported in:

- young children (under 6 years old) who get 1-2 tablets
- older children (6-19 years old) who get 2-3 times the recommended dose
- adults (20 years and older) who get 4-5 times the recommended dose.

Many of the deaths from CQ and HCQ poisonings or overdoses happen in less than three hours after taking the medicine. Some people may even die before reaching the hospital. Symptoms of CQ and HCQ poisoning and overdose can include:

- altered mental status (confusion or disorientation)
- seizures
- low blood pressure
- dangerous heart rhythms

Should I take CQ or HCQ?

Only take these medicines if a doctor prescribes them for you. Do not take any CQ or HCQ that isn't prescribed for you in efforts to prevent yourself from getting the coronavirus. There are non-medical forms of CQ and HCQ that are not meant for human ingestion. Using these can cause poisonings and could possibly result in death.

What should I do if I am prescribed CQ or HCQ by my doctor?

If you are prescribed CQ or HCQ by your doctor for the treatment of coronavirus, follow the directions on the label very closely. Taking more medicine than directed will not make you feel better faster. Do not share these medicines with anyone, including family members. Safe storage is extremely important with these medicines; keep them in their original, child-resistant container. Keep these medicines up, away, and out of sight from children.

For more information please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>. Call your local poison center as soon as a CQ or HCQ exposure is suspected, do not wait for symptoms. The poison experts can be reached 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 1-800-222-1222. Your call is free and confidential.