

Patient Information Leaflet

## **N-Acetylcysteine for Complex Regional Pain Syndrome**

**Produced By: Chronic Pain Service**

**August 2013  
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**If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Quality Team, telephone 01983 534850, who will advise you.**

Your doctor has prescribed *N-Acetylcysteine* (NAC) tablets to alleviate pain and hypersensitivity. NAC is a sulfur-containing amino acid, a derivative of the natural cysteine. It acts as oxygen radical scavenger, reducing toxic effects and seems to improve blood flow leading to better local perfusion and nutrition in “cold” CRPS – that is when you have symptoms of blue/white or cold limb/painful area. Like quite a few other substances used for long-term pain relief, it is not formally licensed for CRPS treatment in the UK, so the manufacturer won't take any responsibility for serious side effects or harm.

**Why has it been recommended nonetheless?**

CRPS symptoms are often difficult to relieve and there aren't many effective treatment options available. Research shows that quite a few patients find NAC helpful, and the side effects are rare and mild.

**How to use it**

We recommend a trial of ca. 3 months during which the tablets (one contains 600mg) should be taken on a regular basis, as the full effect may take quite a while to become apparent. During this trial you should take 600mg three times every day.

**Side effects**

Like all medicines, NAC can have side effects. Compared to other treatments for CRPS these are mild and rare.

Rarely, existing asthma symptoms can deteriorate when taking N-Acetylcysteine. This usually happens when NAC is inhaled, tablets have a lower risk of irritating the airway. If you have *severe* asthma, risk and benefits should be carefully considered with your doctor.

Other uncommon or rare side effects include nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea or constipation, rashes, fever, headache, drowsiness, low blood pressure, and liver problems.

We recommend to follow common sense – if the side effect are mild try to persist for a bit longer as they can get less or disappear altogether after a while. If on the other hand the side effects are severe, persisting or worsening discontinue the treatment.

The effects of Nitroglycerine (GTN spray) for angina can be augmented by NAC, leading to profoundly low blood pressure, dizziness and headaches.

**When not to take NAC tablets**

If you suffer with asthma, particularly severe, or take Nitroglycerine (GTN) spray for angina discuss with your pain specialist or GP.

**Recording your response**

It is quite important for you personally, and also for general use, to record your response to NAC treatment. You can use the tables below to record benefit and side effects.

**PLEASE TAKE THE COMPLETED LEAFLET WITH YOU TO EACH OF YOUR REVIEW APPOINTMENTS AS WE CAREFULLY NEED TO MONITOR OUTCOMES AND SIDE EFFECTS!**

**Benefit**

<b>Intensity score -&gt;</b> (Between 0 = none and 10 = maximum)	<b>Pain</b> (0-10)	<b>Hypersensitivity</b> (0-10)	<b>Cold/blue/white limb</b> (0-10)	<b>Movement restriction</b> (0 full movement – 10 hardly any movement)
Before starting NAC				
Average after week 1				
Average after week 2				
Average after week 3				
Average after week 4				
Average after 2 months				
Average after 3 months				

**Side effects**

<b>Side effects and weeks of treatment</b>	<b>Severity</b> (1 very mild to 10 extremely severe)

I had to stop treatment due to above side effects – Y/ N (please circle one)

I would use NAC tablets again if needed – Y / N (please circle one)

I would recommend this treatment to others - Y / N (please circle one)

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues through NHS interactive available through Sky TV or online at: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: 111

**We Value Your Views On Our Service**

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive  
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust  
St Mary's Hospital  
Newport  
Isle of Wight  
PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 03000 61 61 61 or at [enquires@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquires@cqc.org.uk)

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

Ref: **A/N-Acet/1**