Sertraline for OCD and depression

This leaflet is about the use of sertraline for obsessive compulsive disorder which (which is often shortened to OCD) and depression in children.

This leaflet has been written specifically about the use of this medicine in children. The information may differ from that provided by the manufacturer. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

Do not stop giving sertraline suddenly, as your child is likely to get withdrawal symptoms.

Name of drug
Sertraline
Brand names: Lustral®

Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?
Sertraline is a type of drug called a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor, which is commonly referred to as an SSRI. It increases the activity of a chemical called serotonin in the brain. It will help to reduce the symptoms of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), particularly when used with therapy. It also helps to reduce the symptoms of depression and improve mood and behaviour.

What is sertraline available as?
• Tablets: 50 mg, 100 mg

When should I give sertraline?
Sertraline is usually given once each day, usually in the morning.
Give the medicine at about the same time each day so that this becomes part of your child’s daily routine, which will help you to remember.

How much should I give?
Your doctor will work out the amount of sertraline (the dose) that is right for your child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.
Your doctor will probably recommend that your child has a low dose to start with. They may then increase the dose if necessary.

It is important that you follow your doctor’s instructions about how much to give.

How should I give it?
Tablets should be swallowed with a glass of water, milk or juice. Your child should not chew the tablet.

When should the medicine start working?
It may take up to 4 weeks before your child starts to feel better. It is important that you continue to give sertraline to your child during this time. If you are not sure whether it is helping, discuss this with your doctor but continue to give the medicine.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?
• If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after having a dose of sertraline, give them the same dose again.
• If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after having a dose of sertraline, you do not need to give them another dose. Wait until the next normal dose.

What if I forget to give it?
Give the missed dose when you remember during the day, as long as this is at least 12 hours before the next dose is due.
If you have missed several doses, contact your doctor for advice.

Never give a double dose of sertraline.

What if I give too much?
It may be dangerous to give too much sertraline
If you think you may have given your child too much sertraline, contact your doctor or NHS Direct (0845 4647) or take your child to hospital.
Take the medicine container or packaging with you, even if it is empty. This will be useful to the doctor. Have the medicine or packaging with you if you telephone for advice.

Signs that your child may have had too much sertraline include agitation (they are very restless and anxious), fever (temperature above 38°C), increased sleepiness, fainting, or feeling that the heart is racing.

Are there any possible side-effects?
We use medicines to make our children better, but sometimes they have other effects that we don’t want (side-effects).

Side-effects you must do something about
If your child seems confused or agitated and has a fever (temperature above 38°C), muscle stiffness and a rapid heartbeat, take them to hospital or call an ambulance straight away. They may have a rare but serious reaction called serotonin syndrome.

Other side-effects you need to know about
• Some children may want to hurt themselves (self-harm) or have thoughts about suicide when taking antidepressants such as sertraline, or they may seem hostile. These reactions are more likely at the start of treatment or if the dose of medicine is changed. If you are at all worried, contact your doctor.

Your child may get some of the following side-effects when they first start taking sertraline. These usually wear off after a few days as your child’s body gets used to the medicine. If they are still a problem after a week, contact your doctor.
• Your child may get indigestion, stomach ache, feel sick
(nausea) or be sick (vomit). Giving the medicine with some food or milk may help.

- Your child may get diarrhoea or constipation (difficulty doing a poo).
- They may feel tense, nervous, worried or on edge.
- They may have a headache.
- They may have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares, or they may feel more sleepy and tired than normal.
- They may feel less hungry than usual – encourage your child to eat small meals often.
- They may have difficulty swallowing. Try giving your child soft food to eat.
- They may need to urinate (do a wee) more often than usual or have difficulty controlling urination.
- They may produce a milky substance from the nipples. This is nothing to worry about but contact your doctor if this happens.
- Some people who take sertraline feel elated (very happy). Contact your doctor if this happens.

Can other medicines be given at the same time as sertraline?

- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Sertraline should not be taken with some common drugs that you get on prescription. It is important to tell your doctor and pharmacist about any other medicines your child is taking before starting sertraline.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist before giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

Is there anything else I need to know about this medicine?

- Do not stop giving sertraline suddenly, as your child may get withdrawal effects (dizziness, feeling sick, pins and needles, headache and anxiety). If you or your child wants to stop this medicine, discuss this with your doctor. They may want to reduce the dose bit by bit. Do not change the dose of sertraline that you give your child without discussing this with your doctor.
- If your daughter becomes pregnant whilst taking sertraline or if she thinks she may be pregnant, she should see her doctor as soon as possible. She should continue to take the sertraline until she has seen the doctor.
- When used in the treatment of OCD, sertraline works best when used with behavioural therapy.

General advice about medicines

- Try to give medicines at about the same times each day, to help you remember.
- If you are not sure a medicine is working, contact your doctor but continue to give the medicine as usual in the meantime. Do not give extra doses as you may do harm.
- Only give this medicine to your child. Never give it to anyone else, even if their condition appears to be the same, as this could do harm.
- If you think someone else may have taken the medicine by accident, contact your doctor for advice.
- Make sure that you always have enough medicine. Order a new prescription at least 2 weeks before you will run out.
- Make sure that the medicine you have at home has not reached the ‘best before’ or ‘use by’ date on the packaging. Give old medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep the medicine in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight. It does not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your doctor or pharmacist will be able to give you more information about sertraline and about other medicines used to treat depression and OCD. You can also get useful information from:

- **NHS Direct (England)**
  www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
  0845 46 47
- **NHS 24 (Scotland)**
  www.nhs24.com
  08454 24 24 24
- **NHS Direct Wales / Galw lechyd Cymru**
  www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk
  0845 46 47
- **NI Direct (Northern Ireland)**
  www.nidirect.gov.uk
- **Mind**
  www.mind.org.uk
  Mind infoline: 0845 766 0163
- **Young Minds**
  www.youngminds.org.uk
  Parents helpline: 0808 802 5544

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk