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## INFORMATION ON CROMOLYN SODIUM

### What is Cromolyn Sodium?

- Cromolyn Sodium is a medication that belongs to a group of medications called “mast cell stabilizers”
- Mast cells are allergy cells and release a chemical known as histamine. Histamine is one of the chemicals that is responsible for the well-known allergy symptoms like sneezing, itchy eyes, red eyes and hives
- It is FDA approved for treating a condition known as “mastocytosis” and improves symptoms like diarrhea, flushing, headaches, vomiting, urticaria and abdominal pain and nausea and itching in some patients.
- Cromolyn sodium is not typically used as a first step when treating allergy symptoms. The so called first line treatments in these cases are typically H2 and H1 type antihistamines. However, sodium cromolyn is a common second line or third line agent.
- Cromolyn sodium is used in addressing gastrointestinal and food issues due to the fact that it is poorly absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract. In fact, no more than 1% of an administered dose is absorbed by humans after oral administration. The remainder is excreted in the feces.

### What is the dose of Cromolyn Sodium?

- The exact dose will depend on the condition being treated and how well a person is responding to treatment.
- For severe mastocytosis, up to 200 mg four times daily may be used. This dose may not be appropriate for others. Dr. Donovan or your allergist will advise you of the right dose. For patients using cromolyn sodium off label for food allergy the dose may be different.
- It may take 2-3 weeks to see a response to treatment and so it does not always show benefits right away.
- Cromolyn sodium dosing will be described during the appointment. It is often taken 30 minutes before meals or before bedtime, up to four times daily.

## How is Cromolyn Sodium taken?

- Some pharmacies make pills and some give ampules. It's important to review with the pharmacist exactly what each patient was given.
- If given ampules, start by opening the ampule by twisting off the tab. The pharmacist will advise you how much to take so be sure to review carefully with the pharmacy. Generally each 5 mL ampule has 100 mg of cromolyn sodium. Therefore, many adults with mastocytosis will use 2 ampules up to four times daily. After a while, as the mast diseases control gets better, the dose will likely be reduced.
- The medication should then be squeezed into a glass of water. Dr Donovan recommends that this medication not be mixed with other drinks or food. After adding to the water, be sure to stir well. Drink all of the mixture. This medication should be taken at regular intervals. It is important not to take it more often than directed.

## How is Cromolyn Sodium used in Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS)?

Your allergist or MCAS specialist will describe how Cromolyn Sodium is to precisely be used in your case. Often Cromolyn Sodium is used together with other medications and strategies, introduced sequentially to get a sense of how you respond to these medications. These include:

- a. H2 Blocker (Cromolyn Sodium, Ranitidine, Cimetidine, Nizatidine)
- b. Non-sedating H1 blocker (Cetirizine (Zyrtec), Loraditine (Claritin), Fexodenadine (Allegra))
- c. Low histamine diets (avoiding citrus, berries, nuts, chocolate, dairy, tomatoes, vinegar, spinach, left over food)
- d. Sometimes supplements: Quercetin, vitamins C & D, B complex
- e. Low dose naltrexone
- f. Leukotriene inhibitors (Montelukast (Singulair), Zileuton, Zafirlukast)
- g. Mast cell stabilizers (Cromolyn sodium, ketotifen)

## Who should NOT use Cromolyn Sodium?

- Patients with liver disease
- Patients with kidney disease
- Patients with known heart rhythm problems.
- Patients who are pregnant or breastfeeding

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## What are the possible side effects of Cromolyn Sodium?

*There are several side effects to be aware of when using cromolyn sodium. This list is not a complete list.*

- A. The following side effects may occur and patients should update the prescribing health care practitioner about these side effects:
- bad taste in the mouth
  - diarrhea (less than 5 % of users), nausea (less than 4 % of users), vomiting, diarrhea (less than 5 % of users), stomach upset (less than 2 % of users), gas
  - headaches (less than 5 % of users) and increased sensitivity to sunlight
  - trouble sleeping
  - increased need to urinate
  - skin rashes, flushing, burning
- B. More serious side effects include the following - and require immediate medical attention.
- allergic reactions like skin rash, itching or hives, swelling of the face, lips, or tongue
  - problems with breathing and shortness of breath
  - burning, numbness, or tingling
  - changes in mood or how one feels emotionally
  - discolored mouth or tongue
  - severe dizziness
  - severe fatigue
  - fever
  - muscle aches (less than 4 % of users) and joint pains
  - redness, blistering, peeling or loosening of the skin, including inside the mouth
  - seizure
  - trouble swallowing (pharyngitis and esophageal spasms)
  - unusually weak or tired
  - abnormal liver tests
  - heart rhythm problems
  - swelling in ankles and feet

## What should prompt me to stop Cromolyn Sodium?

Cromolyn Sodium may need to be stopped for a variety of reasons. If there are any side effects, be sure to advise Dr. Donovan or your prescribing doctor right away. He will advise if the medication needs to be stopped.

