

The Carlat Psychiatry Report

ARICEPT (donepezil) Fact Sheet

Manufacturer: Esai and Pfizer; patent expires 2010.

Indications:

- Mild to moderate Alzheimer's dementia.
- Moderate to severe Alzheimer's dementia.
- Off-label use for mild cognitive impairment.

Mechanism: Acetylcholinesterase inhibitor. Enhances brain cholinergic function.

Dosing:

- Supplied as:
 - 5 mg white and 10 mg yellow tablets
 - Orally disintegrating tablets: 5 mg white and 10 mg yellow.
- Start at 5 mg QD, increase to 10 mg QD after four weeks. Morning dosing may minimize insomnia and vivid dreams.
- No dose adjustment needed in renal impairment; only a minimal dose decrease required in hepatic impairment.

Side Effects:

- Most common: nausea, diarrhea, insomnia, fatigue.
- Occasionally: agitation, vivid dreams.
- May aggravate stomach ulcers (potential class effect of all cholinesterase inhibitors)
- Pregnancy risk category C.

Drug-drug interactions:

- Partly metabolized by P450 3A4, so theoretically levels could be increased by 3A4 inhibitors such as Luvox, and levels could be decreased by inducers such as Tegretol.

Pharmacokinetics:

- Metabolized mostly by liver; about 20% is excreted unchanged in the urine.
- Half-life 3 days.

Laboratory monitoring:

- None required

Pearls:

- Aricept has the best evidence for effectiveness in mild cognitive impairment of all cholinesterase inhibitors.