

# Fluoroquinolone antibiotics (-oxacins)

What you need to know about  
side effects



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## Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for patients who have been prescribed a course of fluoroquinolone antibiotics. You have been given this leaflet because there has been some recent safety information about side effects associated with these antibiotics. This leaflet explains about the possible side effects, and what to look out for.

## What are these medicines for?

Fluoroquinolone medicines (ciprofloxacin, levofloxacin, moxifloxacin, and ofloxacin) are effective antibiotics that treat serious and life-threatening infections in the body. Certain drugs in this group are recommended for treatment of genital and pelvic infections.

## What are the possible side effects?

Recently, fluoroquinolones have been reported to cause **rare** but serious side effects involving tendons, muscles, joints, and the nerves – in a small proportion of patients, these side effects caused long-lasting or permanent disability. There have also been reports of a small increased risk of aortic aneurysm and dissection, particularly in older patients, people with a family history of or risk factors for aortic aneurysm or dissection.

## What should I look out for?

If you experience any of the following side effects, stop taking your fluoroquinolone antibiotic and contact your doctor immediately (if you're unable to see your doctor, you can call 111 for advice):

- sudden-onset severe abdominal, chest or back pain
- tendon pain or swelling, often beginning in the ankle or calf – if this happens, rest the painful area until you can see your doctor
- pain in your joints or swelling in your shoulder, arms, or legs
- abnormal pain or sensations (such as persistent pins and needles, tingling, tickling, numbness, or burning), weakness in your body, especially in the legs or arms, or difficulty walking

- severe tiredness, depressed mood, anxiety, or problems with your memory or severe problems sleeping
- changes in your vision, taste, smell, or hearing.

Tell your doctor if you have had one of the above effects during or shortly after taking a fluoroquinolone – this means you should avoid them in the future.

## Who is at at high risk of these side effects?

Doctors will take special care with these medicines if you are older than 60 years of age, if your kidneys do not work well, if you have high blood pressure or if you have had an organ transplant; this is because these groups have a higher risk of side effects.

## What if I am taking other medications?

Talk to your doctor if you are taking or expect to take a corticosteroid (medicines such as hydrocortisone and prednisolone) – taking these medicines with a fluoroquinolone can increase the risk of tendon problems.

## Any questions?

Always read the leaflet that comes with your medicines (ask your pharmacist for a leaflet if you did not receive one) and talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you are concerned about your medicines.

## Further information

This leaflet has been produced in line with the advice from the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and European Medicine Agency (EMA). Further information can be found on the MHRA and EMA websites.