

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Tocilizumab and Sarilumab treatment for COVID-19

What are they and what are they used for?

Tocilizumab and Sarilumab are proteins that block the action of a specific protein involved in inflammatory processes of the body such as in COVID-19, reducing inflammation in your body. This dampening down of the immune system is called immunosuppression.

In COVID-19, the current available evidence indicates that Tocilizumab and Sarilumab are likely to reduce the time spent in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and reduce the risk of death in certain groups of patients with COVID-19.

What you need to know before you are given Tocilizumab or Sarilumab

Your doctor will have checked carefully that there are no reasons why you should not be given the medication before it is prescribed.

You will not be given Tocilizumab or Sarilumab:

- If you are allergic to the medicine or any other ingredient in the medicine.
- If you have an active, severe infection.
- If your liver function tests are significantly raised.
- If your clotting cells (platelets) are significantly decreased.
- If your neutrophils (a type of white blood cell) are significantly decreased.

- If you have a pre-existing condition or treatment resulting in ongoing immunosuppression.

A blood test will be taken before treatment to rule out some of these.

Tocilizumab or Sarilumab should not be used during pregnancy unless clinically necessary. Women of childbearing potential must use effective contraception during and up to three months after treatment. If you are breast feeding or planning to breast feed within three months of this treatment, speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

How are they given?

Both are given as a drip into a vein (intravenous infusion) over one hour.

Possible side effects

Tocilizumab and Sarilumab are both licensed medicines currently used to treat other inflammatory conditions. The use in COVID-19 is outside the current licensed indications for the medicines (referred to as 'off-label'). Based on recent clinical trial data it is believed they work well to treat COVID-19. From the trial data available at present, the most reported side effects are:

Tocilizumab

Upper respiratory tract infections, headache, raised blood pressure, and abnormal liver function tests.

Sarilumab

Low white blood cells, abnormal liver function tests, injection site reactions (include redness and itching), upper respiratory tract infections, urinary tract infections.

After discharge

You must tell your doctor straight away if you think you have an infection during the three months after treatment. The symptoms may include fever, sweats, or chills. Remind your doctor that you have received Tocilizumab or Sarilumab within the last three months.

You should avoid live vaccines for three months after taking this medication. Speak to your doctor or pharmacist before receiving any vaccines.

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse. This includes any possible side effects not listed in this leaflet.

You should also report side effects directly via the national reporting system using either of the details listed below. By reporting side effects you can help provide more information on the safety of this medicine:

- Website: <https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>
- Telephone: 0800 731 6789

Further information or advice

Please contact your GP, local pharmacy, or the Medicines Information patient helpline on telephone 01623 672213, from Monday to Friday, between 9am and 5pm.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet (if relevant) please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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