

Biologics for Psoriasis

Dermatology Department

It has been decided to manage your psoriasis with a biologic therapy.

This leaflet has been designed to provide you with important information regarding your biologic drug.

Starting a new drug can be an anxious time especially with a biologic therapy as you have to learn to inject the drug too. The Biologic drugs come in 'pen' devices which are very easy to operate and you will also have a patient pack with instructions, diagrams and a DVD. In addition to this a nurse will be with you when you do your first injection and if you want a family member or friend can be shown how to give it to you if you would prefer.

Biologics are drugs that work on the immune system to slow down the inflammatory response in psoriasis. These drugs have been used in the Dermatology Department since 2007 and are usually used long term for most patients. The drugs are given either by injection by yourself at home (after training) or infusion in the hospital. A separate information leaflet from the British Association of Dermatologists will have been given to you about the drug and you will have had the opportunity to discuss the treatment with one of the Clinical Nurse Specialists and a Consultant Dermatologist.

It has been decided that you should commence treatment

with: _____

The Clinical Nurse Specialist will complete a prescription and send to the appropriate Homecare Delivery Company. This company will register you and then contact you to arrange the first delivery of injections and a sharps box. It is important that when you receive this delivery that it is put in the fridge. A nurse from the company will be in contact to arrange a visit to provide education on how to give your injection.

Patients are usually capable of giving their own injection following this education. However, Stelara (Ustekinumab) is always given by the homecare company nurse.

ALERT cards – These can be found in the 'Information pack' that you will receive from the Homecare delivery company. Please complete your details and ensure that you keep this in your purse/wallet in case of emergencies

Clinic attendance

It is important that you attend your appointments to enable us to monitor you whilst on a biologic treatment. If you do not attend without notification you will be discharged and we will advise the Homecare Company not to continue to deliver the injections; if you cancel two consecutive appointments we may put your deliveries on hold until you attend an appointment.

You will receive your first appointment about 3 months after you have started your injections. If your psoriasis has improved by at least 50% we will usually continue with treatment, if there has been less than 50% improvement we may consider adding in a tablet or changing to a different biologic.

Appointments are usually every 3 months during the first year, then every 6 months. At each appointment we ask you complete a questionnaire, the Dermatology Life Quality Index, and assess your psoriasis using a PASI (Psoriasis Area Severity Index) score. In addition to this if you have enrolled in the BADBIR (British Association of Dermatologists Biologic Intervention Register) there will be other questionnaires that require completion with the research team.

How to store your injections

- Always keep your injections in a functioning fridge at a temperature between 2-8°. If you want to be sure about the temperature you can buy a small fridge thermometer for as little as £3.
- Keep your injections in their original packaging and if possible, store them in a plastic container to prevent them becoming damp or contaminated.

- Do not allow your injections to become frozen. You can avoid this by not storing them next to the freezer compartment or in an area overstocked with food.
- If you have concerns about how your injections have been stored, or you think they may have frozen, always contact the Homecare delivery company for advice before using them. Do not throw them away unless instructed to.

Infection advice - As the biologic drug has an effect on your immune system it may be more likely that you will get colds and coughs. It is important to seek medical advice if you have a high temperature or are coughing up 'mucky' stuff even at the weekend (call Out of Hours if weekends or GP if surgery open). If you are unwell and commenced on antibiotics to treat an infection **you must not take your biologics drug** until you have finished the antibiotics and have recovered. Please let the CNSs know about any illnesses so we can record the illness in your medical notes. If you have symptoms of **TB (tuberculosis)** night sweats, lethargy, cough or weight loss please contact the Dermatology CNSs.

Neurological problems - If you have numbness, tingling or loss of use of finger, arm, leg or visual problems please contact the Dermatology CNSs. We will arrange for an appointment with one of the Dermatology Doctors for further assessment.

Surgery - If you need to have routine surgery either in hospital or at your dentist please discuss this with the CNSs. It may be necessary for you to stop your biologic treatment before the surgery to reduce the likelihood of you developing a wound infection. This advice is also important if your dentist needs to take a tooth out. If emergency surgery is required this will be done but the biologic will not be given until your wound(s) have healed.

Contraception - It is important that all female patients are using contraception (if appropriate) whilst on a biologic therapy. If you are planning a family (both males/females) please talk to the CNSs or Consultant as the current advice is not to conceive whilst on a biologic therapy.

Vaccinations - We recommend all patients should have an annual flu vaccination. A separate leaflet provides more detailed information about vaccinations whilst on an immunosuppressant drug.

Travel - If you are planning a holiday you may take your injection with you if it's due. It is important that you ensure you have appropriate storage at your destination. If you are travelling by air or sea we would advise you discuss with your travel company.

How to manage the supply of your medication

Your biologic injections are delivered by a Homecare Company on a regular basis (this may change from monthly to three monthly dependent on the drug). The deliveries are managed by the Homecare Company but you too can help to reduce waste:-

- Do not overstock your injections – the homecare company may monitor your stock levels
- Do not accept delivery of stock you do not need
- Contact the homecare company if you have excess stock so they can delay the next delivery (this may happen if you have been unwell and omitted an injection)
- Do not accept a delivery if your medication has been changed or stopped (the Clinical Nurse Specialist will inform the homecare company of any changes)

Faulty injection pens/syringes

If your injection or pen is faulty, discoloured, and cloudy or has flakes or particles in, do not use it but please do not throw it away. Contact the Homecare Company and they will inform you of their process for return of the faulty device/syringe.

Power cuts and fridge breakdowns

Do not remove your injections from the fridge if there is a power-cut. Avoid opening the fridge door. A standard domestic fridge will keep cold for about two to four hours if it is not opened.

If the power comes back on with two to four hours and your injections still feel cool to the touch, you can use them as normal. If you are uncertain contact the Homecare Company for advice.

You may still be able to use your injections even if the power has been off for longer than four hours. Do not remove them from the fridge or throw them away. Contact the Homecare Company for advice.

If your fridge has broken down or the power is likely to be off for a long time arrange for your injections to be kept cold. If this is not possible contact the Homecare Company.

If treatment is stopped

If your treatment is stopped, the Clinical Nurse Specialists will inform the Homecare Company. They will request the unused medication is collected along with the sharps bin.

Training

If you would like further training on using your injection pen or syringe, contact the homecare company or the Clinical Nurse Specialists

Change of contact details

If you change your address or telephone number, please inform the Homecare Company and the hospital.

Useful telephone numbers

Clinical Nurse Specialists

Telephone: 01633 656362(answer phone)

01633 234646 (ward for urgent queries)

Email: derm.ABB@wales.nhs.uk