

INFLIXIMAB

in-flix-ih-mab

What does it do?

Infliximab is an immunosuppressant medicine used to treat inflammatory conditions, such as some types of arthritis, psoriasis, and inflammatory bowel disease. It mops up extra protein that causes inflammation in your body called tumour necrosis factor alpha (TNF-alpha).

Before you start

- Tell your doctor if you have heart or liver problems, or multiple sclerosis.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.
- *Infliximab* weakens your immune system, making it harder for your body to fight infections. You may need tests before you start to make sure you don't have any infections like tuberculosis (TB), HIV, or hepatitis B and C.
- Ask your doctor what vaccines you might need before you start and while you are taking *infliximab*. You should not have a live vaccine while taking *infliximab*.

How should you use it?

Infliximab is given as an infusion into a vein over 2 hours when you first start.

Infliximab can cause a reaction while it is being infused. You may have fever or chills, a skin rash, flushing, chest pain, or feel itchy, dizzy or short of breath. Tell your health professional immediately if any of these symptoms occur. They may need to slow the infusion down or stop it temporarily. You may be given medicines shortly before the infusion to help control this reaction. You will need to stay for about 1 hour after the infusion is finished to check you don't have a reaction.

If you don't have a reaction after several infusions, you may be able to have it more quickly and not wait afterwards.

What if you forget a dose?

Infliximab infusion will be given to you by a health professional. If you miss an appointment, contact the health professional as soon as possible.

Can you take other medicines?

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products or recreational drugs.

What side effects might you notice?

Side Effects	Recommended action
Symptoms of allergy including: skin rash, itching, swelling, trouble breathing, joint, muscle or bone aches and pains Reduced number of blood cells that fight infections or help your blood to clot - symptoms include: fever, chills, sore throat or generally feeling unwell, or easy or unusual bruising or bleeding Tingling or numbness Symptoms of liver problems including: yellow skin or eyes, itching, dark urine, pale bowel motions, abdominal pain Short of breath, persistent dry cough	Tell your doctor immediately
Swollen feet or legs, short of breath Constipation	Tell your doctor
Headache, stomach upset	Tell your doctor if troublesome

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Other information:

- *Infliximab* may increase the risk of some types of cancer, including lymphoma (a cancer of the immune system). Talk with your doctor about this risk compared to what *infliximab* can do to treat your condition.
- Protect yourself from too much sunlight while taking immunosuppressant medicines (they may increase your risk of skin cancer). Always cover up and apply a thick layer of broad spectrum sunscreen (at least SPF30) when outside. Do not use sunbeds.
- Women using *infliximab* for a long time may need cervical screening more often. Discuss with your doctor.
- It is important to tell anyone who gives you medical or dental treatment that you are taking *infliximab*.
- You may not notice the effects of *infliximab* straight away - it may take 2 weeks or up to 6 months.

This leaflet contains important, but not all, information about this medicine.

Prepared by the MyMedicines Committee at Christchurch Hospital, Te Whatu Ora - Waitaha, New Zealand. March 2023