

COVID treatment and guideline group

Tocilizumab and Sarilumab treatment for Covid-19

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet gives information about the medicines, tocilizumab and sarilumab used in the treatment of Covid-19. We hope it answers questions that you or those who care for you may have. This booklet will not replace discussion between you and your care team; it aims to help you understand more about what is discussed. If there is anything that you do not understand, please ask your care team.

What are they used for?

Tocilizumab and sarilumab are both licensed (approved) medicines currently used to treat inflammatory conditions (such as rheumatoid arthritis). Although, they are not yet specifically licensed for the treatment of Covid-19, clinical evidence shows that they work well to treat Covid-19. The medicines work to reduce inflammation (your body's way of fighting against things that harms it) by blocking a naturally occurring protein in your body called interleukin-6.

In Covid-19, the current available evidence indicates that tocilizumab and sarilumab are likely to reduce patients' time spent in intensive care units (ICU), time spent in hospital altogether, and also 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 either of the medicines before it is prescribed.

You will not be given tocilizumab or sarilumab if:

- you are allergic to the drug or any other ingredient in the medicine
- you have an active, severe infection
- your liver function tests (to determine damage to the liver) are significantly raised
- the blood clotting cells that helps your body to stop bleeding (known as platelets) are significantly decreased
- your neutrophils (a type of white blood cell that helps your body fight certain infections) are significantly decreased
- you have a pre-existing condition or treatment resulting in ongoing immunosuppression (the body's inability to fight infections and other diseases)

A blood test will be taken before treatment to determine if you have a low white blood cell count, low platelet count, or high liver enzymes (that might reflect an acute liver problem).

Pregnancy and women of childbearing age

Tocilizumab or sarilumab should not be used during pregnancy unless you are advised to do so by your consultant as there are limited data for use in pregnant women.

Women of childbearing potential must use effective contraception during and up to three months after treatment if asked to take either of these medicines. Please discuss your individual circumstances with your care team.

How they are given

Tocilizumab is given as a drip (intravenous infusion) into a vein, by a doctor or a nurse. They will dilute the solution, set up the drip and monitor you during and after the treatment. The dose of Tocilizumab that you will be given to treat for Covid-19 will be based on your body weight. It is given as single dose over one hour.

Sarilumab is given as a drip (intravenous infusion) into a vein, by a doctor or a nurse. The doctor or nurse will prepare and set up the drip, monitoring you during and after the treatment. The dose of Sarilumab you will be given for Covid-19 is 400mg. It is given as single dose over one hour.

Possible side-effects

From the trial data available at present, the most reported side-effects are:

Drug	Commonly reported side-effects
Tocilizumab	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• infections in your sinuses or throat• blocked or runny nose and sore throat (upper respiratory tract infections)• headache• raised blood pressure• abnormal liver function tests - you will be tested for this
Sarilumab	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• low white blood cell counts – you will be tested for this• abnormal liver function tests – you will be tested for this• injection site reactions (include redness and itching)• infections in your sinuses or throat• blocked or runny nose and sore throat (upper respiratory tract infections), urinary tract infections

After treatment

You must tell your care team straight away if you think you have an infection during the **three months** after treatment with either tocilizumab or sarilumab. Symptoms may include fever, sweats, or chills.

If you get any side effects, talk to your care team - this includes any possible side effects not listed in this leaflet. By reporting your side effects you can help provide more information on the safety of this medicine.

You can also report your side effects directly through the national Yellow Card scheme using the details listed below.

Yellow Card website:

<https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>

Telephone: 0800 731 6789

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

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Published: February: 2021

Review date: February: 2023

Reference no:0802

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Adapted and acknowledgement to Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust