

Biologic treatments for severe asthma

Respiratory

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Why have I been given this information?

This leaflet will help you to better understand the role of the biologics and how they can improve your quality of life if you suffer from severe asthma. Your asthma specialist may be considering whether a biologic treatment is suitable for you.

Please remember that you can always ask more questions, if you have any, to your nurse or doctor.

What are biologic treatments for severe asthma?

Biologic treatments (also called monoclonal antibodies or mAbs) are medicines made from proteins that target specific parts of the immune system. In asthma, they help reduce inflammation in the lungs caused by allergies or high levels of eosinophils.

What is an eosinophil?

Eosinophils are a type of white blood cell associated with inflammation.

People with severe asthma may have high eosinophil levels in their blood, which doctors and nurses can check in your blood test results. Eosinophil levels are important to help specialist asthma clinics decide what type of asthma you have, what treatments, including biologics, are most likely to work for you.

Am I eligible for biologic treatments for asthma?

Biologic treatments are only used for specific types of severe asthma that remain uncontrolled despite high dose inhaled steroids and other treatments. You may be considered if you continue to have symptoms or frequent asthma attacks requiring prednisolone.

We need to initially understand what type of asthma you have.

There are types of asthma which can be treated by biologic treatments. They are:

- Eosinophilic asthma
- Allergic asthma

What are the available biologic treatment options for asthma and how are they administered?

The asthma team will recommend the most suitable biologic based on your symptoms and blood tests. All decisions are discussed at the Birmingham Regional Severe Asthma MDT , and the agreed plan will be shared with you before treatment starts.

Biologic treatments are available either as an injection or as an intravenous (IV) infusion, which are given through a needle into your arm.

What should I expect during my first appointment for biologic treatments?

You will need to come to the hospital for at least the first three doses of your biologic treatments and expect to stay for up to two hours each appointment. When you arrive at the hospital you will meet the nursing staff in our Respiratory Centre, and we will:

- Ask about your asthma history. We will ask you different questions to make sure that all the information we have is accurate
- Check your observations (blood pressure, oxygen levels, temperature and respirations rate)
- Ask you to complete a questionnaire called asthma control test (ACT) and other questionnaires
- Do a spirometry test, used to assess how well your lungs are working
- Do blood tests
- Ask you to sign a consent form for your information to be put onto the severe asthma registry
- Give you your first dose of the biologic and monitored for around an hour after administration
- You may wish to bring a drink and something to keep you occupied

- Be aware that biologic treatments must be given at specific times (every two, four or eight weeks) so it is especially important you can attend all appointments, so your treatment is not interrupted or delayed. We will organise a date suitable for you well in advance

What happens after my first doses of a biologic treatments in the Respiratory Centre?

When you are comfortable, after receiving your first three doses on three separate occasions in the Respiratory Centre and being supervised by members of the asthma team, we will assess to see if you will be eligible to self-administer the injections at home. Please do not worry if you do not feel comfortable to do so, come to the hospital for injections for as long as you need if you prefer. If you are moving to homecare, the company will arrange with you to set up a delivery date and time once a month for you to receive your injection.

Please contact our Respiratory Centre for any queries on **01902 695061**, extension 1.

Be aware

Regular reviews are essential to ensure the treatment remains safe and effective

Then we can safely issue our biologic prescription to your homecare provider if you are going on homecare, and failure to attend appointments may result in your treatment being discontinued.

Frequently asked questions

Do I still need to take my regular medication?

Yes. Biologic therapy is an add on therapy. This means it is to be used alongside your inhalers and other asthma medications.

What about if I am on prednisolone?

If you take daily prednisolone, it is important to continue this until we have planned any changes. Please do not stop taking daily steroids without discussing with the asthma team. This is because prednisolone replaces a natural hormone called cortisol in your body. Sometimes your body stops producing cortisol by itself if it is used to a daily intake of artificial cortisol (prednisolone tablets). Suddenly stopping taking steroids can be very dangerous and send your body into a crisis. If the plan is to reduce your steroids, we will measure your cortisol regularly through a blood test and check that your body is responding well. If you take prednisolone as a course (typically 30 to 40mg for five to seven days) during a severe asthma attack, this will still be the case when having biologics. We will aim to reduce the number of courses of steroids that you need. At every appointment then we will ask you how you feel and see if the biologic treatments are working well.

Will I always need biologic treatment?

You may need to continue biologic treatment long term if it works well for you.

You will try your chosen biologic treatment for at least 12 months and we will monitor your response to it. If it is not working for you, we can switch to another type of biologic treatment or stop it, but you must not stop taking it before speaking to your asthma team.

What are the side effects?

Most side effects are mild and improve over time, the patient information leaflet for your biologic treatment provided will list all the possible risks and side effects. Read the leaflet carefully before starting your treatment

Common side effects for all biologics are:

- Redness or pain at the injection site
- Light headache
- Sore throat
- Muscle ache or joint ache
- Please see the specific biologic booklet that we will give you for information about side effects

Severe Allergic Reactions

Biologic treatments for asthma have an increased risk of a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). The risk is rare (1 in 1000) and more likely if you have a history of allergic reactions or anaphylaxis.

You may be asked to stay in the clinic for a short time after your first few treatments, so your healthcare team can make sure you're not at risk of an extreme allergic reaction.

If you've been told you can self-treat at home, it's important to know the signs of an allergic reaction, such as difficulty breathing, swelling, or feeling dizzy or unwell.

What can I do if I feel unwell?

If you are feeling unwell with your asthma you should following your asthma action plan and adjust your inhalers and start steroids if needed. Being on a course of steroids will not necessarily stop you having your biologic treatments but please let us know before your appointment so we can rebook if necessary. We still recommend contacting your GP or phoning 111 or 999 if necessary.

Please contact our Respiratory Centre for any queries on **01902 695061**, extension 1.

What should I do if I am looking to become pregnant?

Please let us know if you are pregnant or looking to become pregnant. There is currently not much research available around biologic treatments and pregnancy so this is something which will need to be discussed between you and the asthma team and make an individualised plan.

Can I travel while having biologic treatment?

Yes. Please let us know your plans so we can schedule your initial clinic appointments. If you are self-administering at home, make sure to plan your travel around your treatment schedule.

Vaccinations and Special Considerations

Almost all individuals can be safely vaccinated with all vaccines. In very few individuals, vaccination is contraindicated or should be deferred. Where there is doubt, rather than withholding vaccine, advice should be sought from an appropriate specialist.

Individuals who are on or have recently received high doses of certain immunosuppressive or biological therapies should not be given live vaccines because of the risk of severe or fatal infections.

Immunisation with live vaccines should be delayed for six months in children born of mothers who were on immunosuppressive biological therapy during pregnancy.

Asthma & Lung UK



English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowałiby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。