**Patient advice sheet  
Tocilizumab or sarilumab treatment for COVID-19**

**What is it and what is it used for?**

Tocilizumab is an antibody made to block the action of a specific protein (cytokine) called interleukin-6 (IL6).  Sarilumab is another medicine that acts in the same way. Blocking IL6 can reduce inflammation in your body caused by infection with COVID-19. Current evidence shows that using tocilizumab or sarilumab can reduce the time spent in Intensive Care Units (ICU) and reduce the risk of death in some patients with COVID-19.

**What you need to know if you are given tocilizumab or sarilumab?**

**Your doctor will have checked carefully that there are no reasons why you should not be given the drug 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
* If you have an active, severe infection
* If your liver function tests (liver enzymes) 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 determine if you have a low white blood cell count, low platelet count, or high liver enzymes.

Tocilizumab or sarilumab should **not** be used during pregnancy unless clinically necessary.

Women of childbearing potential must use effective contraception for at least 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?**

**A single dose of tocilizumab or sarilumab** is given as a drip (intravenous infusion) into a vein over 1 hour, 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 for COVID-19 is based on your body weight. The dose used for sarilumab is 400mg, whatever your weight is.

**Date your dose was given:**

*(ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you do not know this)*

**Possible side effects**

Tocilizumab and sarilumab are medicines currently licensed to treat other inflammatory conditions (such as rheumatoid arthritis). Their use in COVID-19 is ‘off-label’, that is, outside the current licensed indications for either drug. Based on recent clinical trial data either medicine is believed to work well to treat COVID-19. From the trial data available at present, the most reported side-effects are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Commonly reported side-effects |
| Tocilizumab | Infections in your sinuses or throat, blocked or runny nose and sore throat (upper respiratory tract infections), headache, raised blood pressure, and abnormal liver function tests |
| Sarilumab | Low white blood cell counts, abnormal liver function tests, infections in your sinuses or throat, blocked or runny nose and sore throat (upper respiratory tract infections), urinary tract infections |

**After discharge**

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.

Women of childbearing potential must use effective contraception for at least 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.

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 for reporting side effects: <https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>

Telephone number for reporting side effects: 0800 731 6789

**Further information or advice**

Please contact your GP or local pharmacy, or the Welsh Medicines Information Centre (029 21842251, Mon-Fri 9-5pm).

**Legal Notice**

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

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