

Abatacept (Orencia) – Patient Information

What does Abatacept do?

Abatacept works by modulating T-cell activation, an important step in the inflammatory pathway. By reducing T-cell activity, it helps reduce:

- Joint pain
- Swelling
- Stiffness
- Long-term joint damage

The brand name used is **Orencia**.

Licensed for use in:

- Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)
- Psoriatic Arthritis (PsA)
- Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA)

➤ *Note:* The injection is not licensed for JIA under 18, but the infusion is.

Abatacept can be taken with methotrexate or other cDMARDs, or on its own (monotherapy).

Delivery

Your injections will be delivered to your home by Lloyds Pharmacy Clinical Homecare (LPCH).

- First delivery usually takes 3–4 weeks
- Calls may appear as unknown or withheld numbers
- Future deliveries are arranged to avoid gaps in treatment
- LPCH nurses can supervise your first injection at home
- Sharps bins are supplied and collected

LPCH Contact: ☎ 0345 263 6135 ✉ lpch.customerServiceGlasgow@nhs.net

Storage

- Store in the fridge (2-8°C)

- Do not freeze
- Keep in original packaging to protect from light
- Avoid storing at the back of the fridge (risk of freezing)
- Remove from fridge 30 minutes before injecting

How do you take Abatacept?

1. Subcutaneous (under the skin) injection

- 125 mg once weekly
- Available as a pen or pre-filled syringe
- Single-use only
- You will receive training from a nurse

Video demonstration on how to inject: [ORENCIA® Injection & Infusion Administration Guide](#)

2. Intravenous infusion (drip)

- Dose is based on body weight
- Sometimes given as a loading schedule at:
 - Week 0
 - Week 2
 - Week 4
- Then every 4 weeks thereafter

Infusion details

- Given in the rheumatology day-case unit
- You must be well and free from infection
- Infusion takes 30 minutes
- Appointment lasts around 1 hour to allow for:
 - Cannula insertion
 - Blood pressure, pulse, temperature checks
 - Blood tests if needed

Possible Side Effects

Most people tolerate Abatacept well, but side effects can occur in a small number of patients.

More information:

- **Arthritis UK** – www.arthritis-uk.org
- Patient information leaflet included with your medication

If you experience side effects requiring medical attention:

- Contact your GP or NHS 24 (111)
- Inform the rheumatology team, as your treatment may need review

Illness

If you develop an infection:

- Contact your GP to check if antibiotics are needed
- Do not take Abatacept while on antibiotics
- Restart one week after finishing antibiotics, if you feel well

If you experience frequent infections, inform rheumatology.

COVID-19

Do not take Abatacept until:

- 2 weeks after symptoms start, and
- You are feeling better

Surgery/Operations

For injections:

- Stop 2 weeks before surgery
- Restart 2 weeks after, if wounds are healing well and there is no infection

For infusions:

- Wait at least 4 weeks after your last infusion before surgery
- Restart 2 weeks after surgery, if wounds are healing well

Some surgeons may request you wait until your postoperative review before restarting.

Pregnancy & Breastfeeding

According to BSR guidelines (2022):

- Abatacept should be stopped at conception
- It may be used during pregnancy only if disease is severe and no alternatives exist
- If used in the third trimester, the baby should avoid live vaccines for 6 months (e.g., rotavirus, BCG)
- It can be used during breastfeeding, although evidence is limited

There is limited data on use in men trying to father a child.

Vaccinations

Safe and recommended:

- Flu
- Pneumonia
- COVID-19 vaccines
- Shingrix (inactive shingles vaccine)

Avoid live vaccines:

- Zostavax (live shingles)
- Yellow Fever
- BCG
- MMR

Timing tips:

- If using injections, consider having vaccines on a different day
- If receiving infusions, aim for vaccines mid-cycle (about 2 weeks after an infusion)

Travel

Abatacept injections must be kept cool when travelling.

- Use a cool bag with ice packs
- Do not let the injection touch the ice (wrap in bubble wrap)
- Bring extra resealable bags for long flights
- Always carry medication in hand luggage
- Request a travel letter from rheumatology well in advance