

Tocilizumab (RoActemra / Tyenne / Avtozma) – Patient Information

What does Tocilizumab do?

Tocilizumab blocks Interleukin-6 (IL-6), a protein involved in inflammation. It is therefore known as an IL-6 inhibitor.

It helps reduce:

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

The originator brand is **RoActemra**. NHS Grampian currently uses the biosimilar **Tyenne**, with **Avtozma** becoming available soon.

Licensed for use in:

- Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)
- Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA)
- Giant Cell Arteritis (GCA) (*injection only*)

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.customercerviceglasgow@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 45 minutes before injecting

Room-temperature option

Tocilizumab can be stored:

- Up to 2 weeks
- Below 30°C
- In original packaging

Discard if:

- Not used within 2 weeks
- Exposed to temperatures above 30°C

How do you take Tocilizumab?

1. Subcutaneous (under the skin) injection

- 162 mg every week
- Available as a pen or pre-filled syringe
- Single-use only
- You will receive training from a nurse

Video demonstration on how to use the pre-filled pen and syringe: [Tocilizumab](#)

2. Intravenous infusion (drip)

- Dose is based on weight: 8 mg per kg
- Given every 4 weeks
- Infusions take 60 minutes, but appointments last around 1.5 hours
- Blood tests are taken at infusion appointments if needed
- You must be well and free from infection to receive your infusion

Possible Side Effects

Most people tolerate Tocilizumab 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
- Stop Tocilizumab while taking antibiotics
- Restart one week after finishing antibiotics, if you feel well

If you experience frequent infections, inform rheumatology.

COVID-19

Do not take Tocilizumab until:

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

Surgery/Operations

Stop Tocilizumab (injections and infusions):

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

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

Pregnancy & Breastfeeding

According to BSR guidelines (2022):

- Tocilizumab should be stopped once you become pregnant
- An alternative medication may be offered
- If no suitable alternatives exist and disease is severe, Tocilizumab may be continued during pregnancy
- If used in the last 3 months of pregnancy, the baby should avoid live vaccines for 6 months (e.g., rotavirus, BCG)
- Limited safety data exists for breastfeeding

There is limited data on use in men trying to father a child; an alternative may be recommended.

Vaccinations

Safe and recommended:

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

Avoid live vaccines:

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

Travel

Tocilizumab 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
- Can be kept out of the fridge for up to 2 weeks below 30°C
- Discard if out longer than 2 weeks or exposed to higher temperatures
- Always carry medication in hand luggage
- Request a travel letter from rheumatology well in advance