

ADALIMUMAB (Humira)

What is Humira?

Humira is a protein which blocks the action of Tumour Necrosis Factor alpha (TNF- α). TNF is a naturally occurring chemical which circulates in the blood. In Crohn's Disease an excess amount of TNF may contribute to chronic inflammation and swelling of the gut. Humira may therefore reduce the symptoms of Crohn's disease and help to achieve clinical remission.

Humira is prescribed for moderate to severe Crohn's Disease that has not responded to other medical therapies.

Before starting Humira

Your doctor will organise a blood test and chest x-ray before starting Humira. You will be screened for infections like tuberculosis and hepatitis and may require certain vaccinations prior to starting Humira. You should not have any "live" vaccines once you start Humira. Women may need a pap smear and your doctor may talk to you about family planning.

Smoking makes Crohn's Disease worse. It is highly recommend that smokers quit. Support can be provided to patients who want to stop smoking.

How is Humira given?

Humira is given as an injection directly into the fatty tissue every 2 weeks. The IBD nurse will teach you how to use the Humira pen or syringe.

What dose will I need?

Humira must be injected every 2 weeks. When starting Humira you will have an induction regime followed by a maintenance dose injected on the same day every 2 weeks.

Induction		Maintenance	Review
<i>Week 0</i> 4 injections = 160mg Humira	<i>Week 2</i> 2 injections = 80mg Humira	<i>Week 4, then fortnightly</i> 1 injection = 40mg Humira	<i>Week 12</i> Review with gastroenterologist

What if I forget a dose?

If you forget a dose of Humira, give yourself the injection as soon as you remember. Continue to inject Humira every 2 weeks on the day you would usually have the injection. Contact the IBD Helpline on (03) 9288 3592 if you are not sure what to do.

Routine Monitoring and Follow Up

Once started on Humira, you will need a blood test every 2 months and an appointment to see your gastroenterologist every 3 months for routine check-ups. If you become unwell, you may require more frequent blood tests and check-ups. Please contact the IBD helpline (03) 9288 3592 or your private gastroenterologist's rooms if you feel unwell.

Storage, Transportation and Disposal

Humira should be stored in the fridge and must not be frozen. When transporting Humira, it should be carried in a cool bag with frozen ice packs (up to 12 hours) until it can be stored in the fridge. Used syringes must be discarded into a biohazard sharps container. Containers can be exchanged at your local council and some pharmacies.

What are the side effects of Humira?

<i>Common Side Effects:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Local injection site reactions: redness, swelling and pain● Viral & respiratory infections● Flu-like symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Nausea● Abdominal pain● Abnormal liver function	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Headache● Rash
<i>Uncommon but Important Side Effects:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Serious infections● Slow wound healing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Limb tingling & numbness● Dizziness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Kidney problems●
<i>Rare Side Effects:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reactivation of hepatitis B or tuberculosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Lymphoma● Skin cancer

If you experience symptoms of a severe allergic reaction such as difficulty breathing or swallowing, swelling of the face, lips, mouth, eyes and throat or hives call an ambulance (000) or go to your nearest Emergency Department.

Pregnancy and Humira

As with any medication, women of childbearing age should take special care when taking Humira. If you are pregnant or are planning a pregnancy, please inform your gastroenterologist so they can discuss treatment options with you.

Travel and Humira

If you are planning to travel overseas, please inform your gastroenterologist or IBD nurse. You may need some additional advice with planning before you travel.

What do I do if I feel unwell?

Humira can lower your immune system, making you more prone to infections. If you develop a chest infection, you should visit your GP who may prescribe a course of antibiotics to help you recover more quickly. If you experience symptoms of an infection, vomiting or diarrhoea (more than normal), severe abdominal pain or if you have other concerns about your health, contact the St Vincent's IBD team.

Who do I contact for help?

You can contact the IBD Helpline on (03) 9288 3592 during business hours. Private patients can contact their gastroenterologist's private rooms directly.

For urgent matters outside of business hours you can call the St Vincent's Hospital Switchboard on (03) 9288 2211 and ask to speak with the Gastroenterologist on call. In an emergency you should go to your local Emergency Department or call an ambulance (dial 000).