

# Omalizumab: Pharmacist-led clinic

## Information for patients

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### **What is Omalizumab?**

Omalizumab is a man-made protein (monoclonal antibody) that is similar to natural proteins that the body produces. Omalizumab is used to treat Chronic Spontaneous Urticaria (CSU) in children who are at least 12 years of age and adults. Omalizumab works by blocking a substance called immunoglobulin E (IgE) in the body, which plays an important role in causing CSU.

If you have CSU and high doses of antihistamines and leukotriene inhibitor have not helped, you may be eligible for this treatment. However, we would need to assess your eligibility before making a final decision. This means that you will need to complete a CSU diary regarding the number of wheals (red, swollen marks) and the severity of itch for at least 4 weeks (this is to work out your Weekly Urticaria Activity Score (UAS7)).

### **What are the side effects of treatment?**

The treatment is usually well tolerated. The most common side effect is a small reaction at the site of injection (itch, pain, redness or swelling) shortly after it is given. Headache is also common.

The most important potential side effect is a severe allergic reaction (called anaphylaxis) developing within hours of the injection. Symptoms of this are urticaria (hives), difficulty breathing and feeling faint/dizzy. Anaphylaxis is very rare in patients with CSU but it does mean that omalizumab must be given in the hospital initially.

Other side effects that have been reported include fever or abdominal pain in children. Sore throat and 'flu-like symptoms' may also occur for a day or two after your treatment. Long-term side effects have not been reported, although it is possible that new problems may emerge as more people receive this treatment.

### **How does Omalizumab react with other medications?**

There are no known interactions with other medicines. It should normally be possible for you to stop taking strong drugs for urticaria, such as immunosuppressives and steroids, whilst receiving omalizumab treatment. If you have any questions about your medication, please ask the pharmacist at your appointment.

**You should continue to take your antihistamines and a leukotriene inhibitor throughout the course of treatment.**

### **How long is the treatment?**

You will normally have an injection every 4 weeks for 6 months. However, if after 3 injections you do not respond to treatment, it will be stopped and we will discuss other treatments with you.

It is not possible to predict who will respond to treatment or whether urticaria will come back after stopping treatment. If your symptoms come back you may be eligible for more omalizumab injections – please contact the Dermatology clinic if this happens (phone number at the end of this leaflet).

## How do we give the treatment?

Omalizumab is injected under the skin. As there is a very small risk of an allergic reaction (anaphylaxis), you will need to have the treatment in the clinic for the first 3 doses. You must wait for 2 hours after the first and second injection and 30 minutes after the third injection so urgent treatment can be given if you develop symptoms of anaphylaxis.

After the initial 3 doses it may be suitable for you to self-inject the medication at home. You will be instructed on how to do so by the Dermatology nurses during your initial appointments in the clinic. You will also be registered for omalizumab homecare service, which means that your injections will be delivered to your home or alternative address of your choice. The Dermatology pharmacist will provide more information and will register you for the homecare service. Please let us know if you think that the homecare service may not be suitable for you.

## Monitoring of treatment

Once your Dermatology consultant and you make a decision that you would like to have the omalizumab treatment you will be referred to a pharmacist-led clinic. This means that you will have regular appointments with a Dermatology pharmacist, who will monitor your omalizumab treatment and contact your Dermatology consultant as required.

After your 3<sup>rd</sup> injection, you must complete your weekly UAS7 for four weeks to see if your urticaria has responded sufficiently to continue with the injections. Your pharmacist will discuss your UAS7 scores with you at your next appointment.

Before your treatment is stopped at 6 months you will also have an appointment with a Dermatology consultant. If your urticaria flares up after the treatment is stopped you need to start completing your weekly UAS7 and book an appointment with a Dermatology consultant. If your urticaria requires further treatment you will be seen every 3 months by a Dermatology consultant or a pharmacist.

You do not need any routine blood tests when you are receiving omalizumab injections but it is important that you complete UAS7 so we can monitor your response to the treatment.

If you have any further questions on omalizumab or how the clinic works, please contact the clinic.

## Contact details

Pharmacist – Led Clinic  
Dermatology Department  
Lauriston Building  
Lauriston Place  
Edinburgh, EH3 9EN

Phone: **0131 536 2079**

Wednesday 13.30 – 16.30

Adapted from *Information about Omalizumab Urticaria Clinic* by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.