

# Rifampicin and Clindamycin for Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS)

## Information for patients

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This leaflet has been provided to help you understand more about the treatment of hidradenitis suppurativa with the antibiotics rifampicin and clindamycin. It will aim to answer any questions you may have about taking rifampicin and clindamycin for the treatment of hidradenitis suppurativa or folliculitis decalvans. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Please read this leaflet and the manufacturers' leaflets for rifampicin and clindamycin, which will be provided with your medicines. Copies of these leaflets are also available to access from [www.medicines.org.uk/emc](http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc) (Please be aware that the manufacturers' leaflets may not mention your clinical condition – see paragraph below, "Taking an unlicensed medicine").

## About rifampicin and clindamycin treatment

Rifampicin and clindamycin are both antibiotics, which work by killing or limiting the spread of bacteria that can cause infections. They can be used in combination with each other or with other antibiotics, to treat or prevent a number of different infections.

Rifampicin is never recommended to be used alone, so it is important that it is taken alongside clindamycin. The combination of rifampicin and clindamycin can be effective in some cases of HS by reducing inflammation and preventing infections. Your doctor thinks that you would benefit from this treatment.

## Taking an unlicensed medication

Rifampicin and clindamycin are licensed in the UK for the treatment of several infections. However, their use in the treatment of HS, outside the setting of a flare-up triggered by infection, is 'unlicensed'. Your doctor will discuss with you why they are recommending these antibiotics, so please ask them if you have any questions.

## How do I take rifampicin and clindamycin?

- Read the manufacturers' printed information leaflets supplied with the medicines before you start treatment.
- Take your medicines exactly as directed by your doctor. Both rifampicin and clindamycin are usually taken twice a day when used in the treatment of HS.
- Do not stop taking the rifampicin or clindamycin without speaking to your doctor first or until your course is complete.
- Rifampicin must be taken on an empty stomach (at least 30 minutes to 1 hour before food, or at least 2 hours after food).

- Clindamycin can be taken before or after food in an upright position. It must be swallowed whole with a full glass of water.
- Try to take the medicines at the same time each day to avoid missing any doses.

### When should I not take rifampicin and clindamycin?

- If you have a history of allergy to rifampicin and clindamycin or their ingredients.
- If you are currently jaundiced (yellow skin).
- If you are taking Saquinavir or ritonavir.
- If you are in the early stages (<12 weeks) of pregnancy.

### What do I do if I miss a dose of rifampicin and clindamycin?

Please **do not take a double dose under any circumstances** if you miss one of your rifampicin or clindamycin doses.

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your normal dosing schedule.

### Are there any side effects to taking rifampicin and clindamycin?

Further information on the side effects of taking rifampicin and clindamycin can be found in the manufacturer's leaflet that comes with the medication. Please refer to these for further information. Some of the more important or common side effects are below. It is important to know that if you develop severe side effects, you **must stop taking both medicines**.

### IMPORTANT - Serious side effects:

You must seek medical attention (via NHS 111 or your GP) if you develop any of the following:

- Diarrhoea, which is severe, prolonged, or bloody. This may be a sign of bowel inflammation (pseudomembranous colitis), which can occur following treatment with antibiotics. If this happens, you must stop taking both the clindamycin and rifampicin immediately.
- Wheeziness, difficulty in breathing, swelling of eyelids, face or lips, rash or itching (especially affecting the whole body). These may be signs of a severe allergic reaction.
- A fever with yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes (jaundice), feeling or being sick, feeling tired and generally unwell, and/or loss of appetite. These may be signs of liver problems.
- Blistering and peeling of large areas of skin, fever, cough, feeling unwell, and swelling of the gums, tongue, or lips. These may be signs of a serious skin condition.
- Flu-like symptoms including chills, fever, headaches, dizziness and bone pain, shortness of breath, and malaise. This may be 'flu syndrome' which can be caused by rifampicin.
- Bleeding or easy bruising, red spots under the skin, black stools, fever, sore throat, mouth ulcers, or recurrent infections. These may be signs of a serious blood condition.

### Side effects of rifampicin:

- Reddish coloration of the urine, sweat, sputum (phlegm) and tears. Soft contact lenses may be permanently stained. Do not be alarmed, this is harmless. This will stop when the rifampicin is stopped. Consider wearing glasses instead of contact lenses.

- Headache.
- Flushing and mild rash.

### Side effects of clindamycin:

- Stomach ache or cramps.
- Unpleasant taste in the mouth.
- Skin dryness or irritation.

## What monitoring is needed for rifampicin and clindamycin?

Blood tests to check your kidneys, liver, and full blood count will be taken at the dermatology outpatient clinic before you start the treatment. You would then have your blood tests repeated after 4-6 weeks of being on the treatment, to check that these medicines are not causing any of the serious side effects outlined above. These blood tests can be done at the phlebotomy service at the Lauriston Building, or with your GP.

If you have diabetes, you may need to monitor your blood glucose levels more frequently as your diabetes may be harder to control. Your doctor will be able to advise you about this.

## How long will I need to take rifampicin and clindamycin?

Every person's HS is different, but you will take rifampicin and clindamycin for 3 months (12 weeks) and then you will be reviewed in clinic.

## How do I get a repeat prescription?

Your dermatologist will make a decision to start this treatment at your dermatology outpatient appointment. They will then ask your GP to prescribe the medicine for you. You will continue to be followed up regularly at the hospital.

## Further information

**Both rifampicin and clindamycin may interact with other medicines.** Please tell the doctor who is prescribing them for you about any other medicines you are taking, including herbal or over-the-counter medicines. If you feel concerned, you may also wish to discuss them with your pharmacist.

Rifampicin reduces the effectiveness of different types of hormonal contraception. If you are currently using hormonal contraception, including the contraceptive pill, please discuss this with your doctor. You will need to switch to a different contraceptive method that is not affected by your treatment, and this will need to be continued throughout your treatment and for four weeks after stopping treatment.

If you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant, or are planning on becoming pregnant, please speak to your doctor before taking rifampicin or clindamycin.

If you are breastfeeding, small amounts of both rifampicin and clindamycin may pass into the breast milk. Please speak to your doctor before breastfeeding.

## Contact us

If you have any queries, please contact the Dermatology team, Lauriston Building, Edinburgh on **0131 536 3520** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

**Please leave an answer phone message with your details (including hospital number and telephone number) with a brief explanation of the problem you are experiencing.**

You can expect a call back, but please note that this would be a call from an **unknown** or **private** telephone number, so do pick up the call as it is likely to be the team getting back in touch with you.

Out of hours if you think your problem cannot wait until the next working day, please contact an out of hours GP or attend the Emergency Department if you think your issue is life threatening.

## Useful Resources

Visit the links or scan the QR codes below on your smart phone.

The Hidradenitis Suppurativa Trust is a UK registered charity dedicated to raising awareness, understanding and support for those with HS:

[www.hs-foundation.org](http://www.hs-foundation.org)



If you require further information on HS, please visit the British Association of Dermatologists website at British Association of Dermatologists:

[www.bad.org.uk](http://www.bad.org.uk)



If you require more information on your condition, please visit:

Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) leaflet:

<https://cdn.bad.org.uk/uploads/2021/11/15153002/Hidradenitis-suppurativa-PIL-May-2021.pdf>



Folliculitis decalvans leaflet:

<https://cdn.bad.org.uk/uploads/2021/11/19174103/Folliculitis-decalvans-PIL-November-2022.pdf>



If you would prefer to have a printed leaflet, please ask the doctor seeing you in clinic for this.

### Acknowledgement

This leaflet has been adapted from the following resources:

DER\_RCHS.pdf (stgeorges.nhs.uk)

Rifampicin and Clindamycin treatment for Hidradenitis Suppurativa (gloshospitals.nhs.uk)

Hidradenitis-suppurativa-PIL-May-2021.pdf (wpengine.com)

