

Infliximab (Remicade®/Inflectra®)

Key point:

- Infliximab (also known as Remicade® or Inflectra®) is a biologic medication that is given for various GI or Rheumatologic conditions. It is given as an infusion through an IV directly into your bloodstream. This can be done in a hospital, infusion center, doctor's office, or even in your home under the administration of a home infusion service.
- Most commonly, when a patient starts Infliximab, the first three infusions are given closer together in shorter intervals. It takes careful monitoring and consistent treatments to be effective. The intervals between treatments and dose of the medication may change over time. Please follow your provider's instructions. It may take time to see full effects.

What is Infliximab?

- Infliximab is part of a group of medications called anti-tumor necrosis factor antibodies (Anti-TNF). These medications work by blocking inflammatory chemicals in the blood and may lower the number of immune system cells in the body. If you are on Infliximab, you have likely been diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder such as Crohn's Disease, Ulcerative Colitis or another rheumatologic disease. This drug helps reduce irritation, pain, inflammation and swelling from these illnesses.
- Currently there are 2 forms of this medication Remicade® and Inflectra® that are approved by the FDA. Inflectra® is called a "biosimilar" medication and Remicade® was the originator medication. They are considered to work in a similar fashion.

How is this given?

- Initially you will likely get 3 "induction doses", or doses that are given close together to build up the amount of medication in your system. These are usually given on day 1, then 2 weeks after the first dose, and again 6 weeks after the first dose.
- After this time, you will be given "maintenance doses". These are given on a schedule determined by your provider (usually anywhere from every 4 to 8 weeks). This schedule is decided based on your response to the medication and severity of your disease. It is important to follow this schedule closely.

What are benefits of Infliximab?

- Benefits of this medication can include having less active disease and fewer symptoms, such as less diarrhea and abdominal pain, and improved appetite and growth. This medication is also used for patients who have fistulas (abnormal connections from the intestine to another area of the body) to help close these. It also decreases the need for steroids.

What are the risks of Infliximab?

- Infusion reactions can occur. Symptoms can include shortness of breath, rash, and fever. These symptoms are monitored by a nurse during the infusion. Sometimes medications will be given prior to the medication to avoid this.
- There is an increased risk of infection, such as bacterial infections (pneumonia), tuberculosis, and other infections
- Psoriasis (a skin problem)
- Very rarely, brain inflammation, lymphoma, and liver disease can occur

Special Instructions

- Let your provider know if you need to reschedule an infusion.
- Make sure you get tuberculosis screening (PPD, Tspot, quantiferon) before starting this drug.
- It is important for you to get a yearly flu shot (not nasal spray) while on this medication.



- It is recommended that live virus vaccines are avoided while on this medication, you should check with your specialty provider before getting vaccines.
- Talk with your provider before starting any new drugs including over-the-counter medications, natural products, or vitamins.
- Inform your doctor if you are experiencing any flu or cold like symptoms prior to your scheduled infusion, or if you have been exposed to any illnesses prior to your scheduled infusion.
- Inform your doctor if you are changing insurance providers well in advance of your next dose of infliximab

Call your GI provider if your child:

- Has a sign of a reaction such as: wheezing, chest tightness, fever > 101F, cough, changes in skin color, swelling, headache, nausea, vomiting, itching, fatigue, stomach pain or eye pain.
- Has any new rashes
- Has an infection/illness or is taking antibiotics.
- Has wounds that will not heal.
- Has dark urine or yellow skin/eyes
- Has weight loss
- Is pregnant or plans on getting pregnant
- Is coughing for more than 2 weeks
- Has been exposed to a serious illness such as mononucleosis (mono) or varicella (chicken pox)
- If you are concerned about a change in your child's health

Go to the Emergency Department if your child

- Has acute severe pain
- Has seizures
- Has difficulty breathing or other symptoms concerning of an anaphylactic reaction

Learn More Online

- For more information visit www.gikids.org (brought to you by NASPGHAN)
- To locate a pediatric gastroenterologist in your area, please visit our website at www.naspghan.org

IMPORTANT REMINDER: *In case of an emergency with the patient, please contact 911. This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) and the Association for Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition Nurses (APGNN) is intended only to provide general information and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your health care provider about your child's specific condition or any concerns.*

Sources

Infliximab: Lexicomp: Pediatric drug information. 2018

Up To Date, 2018

Infliximab/Infliximab Prescribing Guide

Written by: L. Hauptman MS, RN, CPNP, C. Dolan MS, RN, FNP-BC, E. Burch, MS, RN, CPNP

NASPGHAN/APGNN Review: February 2019