

**Actemra is a biologic therapy that is indicated to treat:**

- Moderately to severely active [rheumatoid arthritis](#) (RA) who has had an inadequate response to one or more disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs)
- Giant cell arteritis (GCA)
- Active polyarticular juvenile idiopathic arthritis
- Active systemic juvenile idiopathic arthritis

**What Is Actemra?**

Actemra (tocilizumab) is an FDA-approved prescription medication administered for patients via IV infusion. Actemra is a type of medication called an interleukin-6 (IL-6) receptor antagonist and has been used to treat a variety of complex conditions by changing the way your immune system works.

**How Actemra Works**

Actemra works by blocking the action of a bodily protein called interleukin-6 (IL-6). This protein is believed to play a part in [rheumatoid arthritis](#). In patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), this protein connects to cells and tells them to activate. When the cell activates, it may contribute to the signs and symptoms of RA.

**What Is Actemra Used For?**

Doctors order tocilizumab to treat several medical conditions.

**Actemra treats:**

- moderately to severely active [rheumatoid arthritis](#) (RA) who has had an inadequate response to one or more disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs)
- giant cell arteritis (GCA)
- active polyarticular juvenile idiopathic arthritis
- active systemic juvenile idiopathic arthritis

**Actemra Infusion Dosage and Administration**

Patients receive tocilizumab intravenously. Treatment time for an Actemra infusion usually lasts roughly 60 minutes.

**Dosage and Frequency**

Your Actemra infusion dose is based on your weight, so before every infusion you'll be weighed. If your weight changes, you and your healthcare provider will decide if a change in dose is necessary.

Actemra is typically administered every four weeks.

### **Administering Actemra via IV Infusion**

1. The nurse prepares the patient's arm by using rubbing alcohol to sterilize the location that is being used to insert the IV needle.
2. Following needle insertion, the IV line is held in place with tape.
3. The nurse attaches the patient's IV line to the line coming down from the bag of medication.

Every half-an-hour, the patient's nurse takes his or her vitals.

### **Actemra Infusion Side Effects**

As with all medications, [side effects are possible](#).

The most common side effects of Actemra include:

- Upper respiratory tract infections (common cold, sinus infections)
- Headache
- Increased blood pressure
- Injection site reactions

Additional rarer side effects include:

- Serious allergic reactions including hives, rash, or flushing
- Nervous system problems
- Hepatitis B infection
- Cancer
- Liver problems (hepatotoxicity)
- Tears or perforation of the stomach or intestines

During and after treatment, patients need to inform their healthcare provider or nurse if they experience any serious or persistent side effects, including:

- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Swelling of lips, tongue, or face
- Chest pain
- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Moderate to severe abdominal pain or vomiting

### **How To Prepare for an Actemra Infusion**

It is essential that patients inform their physician if they currently have, or in the past had:

- Diabetes
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
- A weak immune system
- Tuberculosis (TB) or have been in contact with someone with TB

- Lived or have traveled to certain parts of the United States where there is an increased chance of getting fungal infections
- Hepatitis B
- Serious infections
- Allergies to any of Actemra's ingredients

Before you start on Actemra, your healthcare provider will do a variety of blood tests. These tests will also occur 4 to 8 weeks after the first infusion treatment and then every 3 months or every 6 months depending on the type of test.

Before treatment, patients should get a good night's sleep. In addition, they need to drink an adequate amount of fluid and eat a meal.