

Certolizumab (Cimzia®) Drug Information Sheet

What is Certolizumab (Cimzia®)?

Certolizumab pegol is a drug that reduces the signs and symptoms of moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis (RA), psoriatic arthritis (PsA), ankylosing spondylitis, and Crohn's disease. It works to improve such symptoms as joint swelling, pain, fatigue, and morning stiffness. The brand name of certolizumab pegol is Cimzia®. It is a biologic drug that is in a class of drugs called anti-TNFs or TNF blockers.

When you start certolizumab, you will receive two 200-mg injections on the first day (week 0), then at 2 weeks and at 4 weeks. After that first initial dosing, your maintenance dose will be one shot every 2 weeks or 2 shots every 4 weeks.

What about side effects?

The most common side effect is serious infection. Certolizumab can lower the body's ability to fight infection. Be sure to contact your physician if you have any signs of infection, such as fever, cough, or red or painful skin. You may have to stop certolizumab while being treated for an infection. You may also have to stop certolizumab if you are planning a surgery.

You will need to have a negative tuberculosis (TB) skin test before beginning certolizumab therapy. Your doctor may also want to check your blood to make sure you do not have Hepatitis B or C.

You should not be given any live vaccines, such as Flu-Mist (the nasal-spray flu vaccine), the chicken pox vaccine, the shingles vaccine or the measles vaccines, while on certolizumab. The flu-shot (flu injection vaccine) is not a live virus and all patients should consider having this vaccination yearly.

Occasionally some patients develop a reaction at the injection site such as, redness, pain or swelling. Notify your doctor to find out the best way to handle any reactions.

If you have Multiple Sclerosis, this is not the right medicine for you. This class of drugs can make Multiple Sclerosis worse.

Allergic reactions may happen. Call your healthcare provider or an emergency medical provider if you have any signs of an allergic reaction, such as rashes or hives; swollen face, eyelids, lips, or tongue; and difficulty breathing.

What about other medications?

When you are taking certolizumab, it is very important that your doctors know if you are taking any other medicine. This includes prescription and non-prescription medicines as well as birth control pills, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Certolizumab can be taken with other medications – NSAIDS (Celebrex, ibuprofen, naproxen), prednisone, methotrexate, and plaquenil. You should not take certolizumab with other TNF-blockers, or other biologic drugs used to treat RA.