



Patient & Family Guide
2016

Infliximab (Remicade®) Therapy



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Infliximab (Remicade[®]) Therapy

Your healthcare provider feels that treatment with infliximab may be helpful in managing your inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). The brand name for infliximab is Remicade[®].

This pamphlet gives information about infliximab, to help you choose whether or not you want to use this treatment.

This pamphlet will give you some basic information. It does not take the place of any information or instruction that your healthcare provider or pharmacist gives you.

If you have any questions, please ask.

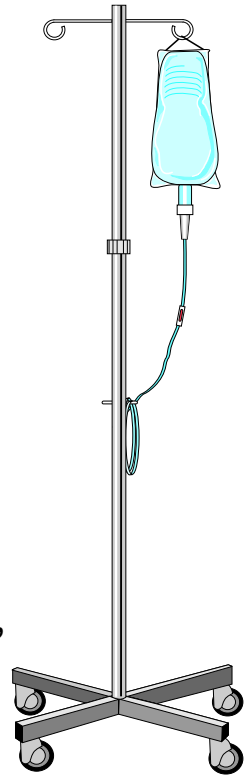
We are here to help you.

What is infliximab?

- One part of the immune system is called “tumour necrosis factor” (TNF). TNF is involved in chronic inflammation (swelling), which is a major factor in causing your IBD symptoms.
- Infliximab is an anti-TNF drug which suppresses (slows down) the immune system, lessens the inflammation in your bowel, and improves your symptoms.
- IBD is known for inflammation and ulceration (pus formation) of the bowel. In IBD, your immune system cannot tell the difference between foreign (from outside your body) substances and your body’s own tissues. This causes inflammation of the bowel and many of the other symptoms you may have (like diarrhea or pain).
- IBD is usually treated with medications to lower inflammation and/or infection. It can also be treated with medications which suppress the immune system.

How is infliximab given?

- Infliximab is given by intravenous (IV) infusion. It is given through a small, flexible tube inserted (put) into one of the veins in your arm. The infusion takes a little more than 2 hours.
- Most infliximab infusions in Nova Scotia are given at private infusion clinics. These Coverdale Clinics© are in Halifax, Dartmouth, Bridgewater, Antigonish, Kentville, Truro, Yarmouth, and Sydney. There is no cost to you for the infusion clinic.
- Every time you have an infusion at the clinic, staff will send a report to your healthcare provider with your weight, dose (the amount you take), and information on how you are doing. Any side effects will be treated right away.



Precautions before you start infliximab

Before starting infliximab treatment, precautions can be taken to lower risks. Taking these precautions often results in successful treatment with very few downsides.

- You will have some routine blood tests, a tuberculosis (TB) skin test, and a chest X-ray.
- Your healthcare provider may want you to get your immunizations (shots) updated for tetanus, varicella (chickenpox), and pneumonia.
- Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about any other health problems you have because they may get worse when using infliximab. This includes any chronic (long-term) or recurrent infections, blood conditions, history of or exposure to TB, hepatitis B virus/carrier, or diabetes.
- Because of increased infection risk, avoid live vaccines (vaccines that have a weakened form of a virus in them) while being treated with infliximab. If you are due for vaccinations or plan to be vaccinated, tell your healthcare provider.

- Do not start any new drug treatments. Interactions between drugs may increase the risk of serious side effects. Ask your healthcare provider about possible complications before starting a new drug.
- Have regular blood testing and regular check-ups with your healthcare provider.
- **It is also important to tell your healthcare provider if you are, or plan on getting pregnant.** Tests have shown no harmful effects during pregnancy while taking infliximab. Your last dose is usually planned early in your 3rd trimester of pregnancy. Infliximab is started again shortly after you give birth. As it is a large molecule, it does not pass into your breast milk, so you can still safely breastfeed your baby.

In the 1st year after birth, your baby should not get any live vaccines. It is very important to talk about this with your healthcare provider.

What are the possible side effects of infliximab?

- Like any medication, infliximab has some possible side effects. Most patients have no side effects with their infusion.
- Occasionally, patients have flu-like symptoms, such as:
 - › Fever
 - › Chills
 - › Headache
 - › Dizziness
 - › Muscle aches
 - › A change in blood pressure
 - › Itching
 - › Flushing (skin or face becomes red or hot)
 - › Sweating
 - › Rash
 - › Wheezing
 - › Chest pain
 - › Shortness of breath
 - › Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach)
 - › Vomiting (throwing up)
- These side effects can usually be helped with medication. However, if they cannot be taken care of, or if the symptoms get worse, staff will stop the infusion.

Common side effects of taking infliximab are:

- Respiratory infections (for example, in the lungs)
- Stomach (belly) pain
- Hives
- Fainting
- Muscle pain
- Unusual tiredness or weakness

Less common symptoms are those related to the common cold, such as:

- Nasal congestion (stuffy nose)
- Coughing
- Runny nose
- Sore throat and sneezing

High risk of infection

- Anti-TNF drugs such as infliximab work by stopping the immune responses which cause your IBD symptoms, but they also lessen other immune responses. This means you may have a higher risk of infection.

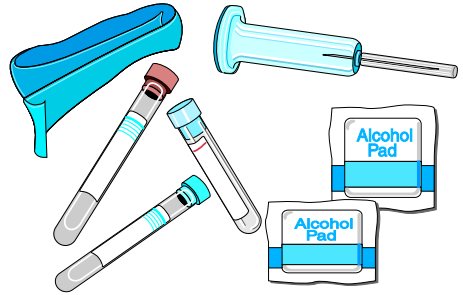
There is a very small chance of getting a life-threatening infection which may cause death.

- **Some patients on infliximab have had problems ranging from the common cold to more serious and potentially life-threatening infections like:**
 - › Pneumonia
 - › TB
 - › Other bacterial, fungal, and viral infections throughout the body
- If you get an infection while on infliximab, you will be checked closely and treated if needed. If the infection becomes serious, treatment may be stopped.

This pamphlet is just a guide. If you have questions, please talk to your healthcare provider. We are here to help you.

Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE)

Some patients treated with infliximab have had abnormal blood test results where auto-antibodies (antibodies directed against your own body) were found. This is called systemic lupus erythematosus and it is caused by taking infliximab. In these patients, as soon as they stopped taking infliximab, their blood tests went back to normal.



- **Tell your healthcare provider if you have any of these symptoms of SLE:**
 - › Chest discomfort or pain
 - › Shortness of breath
 - › Joint pain
 - › Rash on cheeks or arms that gets worse after being in the sun

A very small number of cases of lymphomas and other cancers have been reported, including a fatal cancer called hepatosplenic T-cell lymphoma.

Talk with your healthcare provider

- If you notice any serious side effects, or side effects that do not go away, it is important to tell your healthcare provider so changes can be made.
- Usually symptoms of side effects can be taken care of with other medications, but you may have to lower your infliximab dose or stop your treatment.
- Talking with your healthcare provider when you notice any changes in side effects will help you pick the treatment which will work best for you.

Looking for more health information?

This pamphlet and all our active patient pamphlets are searchable here:

<http://bit.ly/NSHApamphlets>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute healthcare or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.