

Ustekinumab

Medication Information Leaflet

What is this medication for?

Ustekinumab belongs to a class of medicines called biologics. Biologics are genetically engineered proteins. Ustekinumab works by blocking the activity of proteins known as interleukin (IL) 12 and 23.

IL-12/23 levels are increased in diseases such as psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease. This medication helps to reduce the activity of the immune system and the symptoms of the disease.

Ustekinumab does not work immediately and it may take several weeks before you notice any improvement in symptoms.

How should I take/use this medication?

Ustekinumab should be taken as prescribed and you should not stop using the medication without discussing it with your doctor. Stopping Ustekinumab abruptly may cause the symptoms of your condition to return.

It may be taken alone, with methotrexate, or with other disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs).

Ustekinumab is available in a solution for injection that comes in a pre-filled form (ready-to-use). It is given via injection under the skin (subcutaneously) of your stomach, thigh or upper outer arm or into the blood vessel (intravenous infusion). You and your doctor will decide if you should administer Ustekinumab yourself. You or your carer should receive training on how to inject the medication from your doctor, pharmacist or specialty nurse prior to attempting administration on your own. Always remember to rotate the injection site.

Your doctor will decide how much Ustekinumab you need and for how long.

What should I do if I forget to take/use this medication?

If you miss a dose, inject it as soon as you remember. Talk to your doctor to discuss when the next dose should be given.

What precautions should I take?

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this medication or any of the other ingredients of this medication
- You are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding
 - Avoid getting yourself pregnant while you are taking Ustekinumab as the effect in pregnant women is unknown. You must use effective contraception while using Ustekinumab and for at least 15 weeks after the last dose.
 - If you are breastfeeding or planning to breastfeed, discuss with your doctor if you should breastfeed or use Ustekinumab.
- You have a history of:
 - Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C
 - Tuberculosis
 - Cancer
- You have infections or low blood counts
- You are planning to receive any vaccines and to avoid any live vaccinations.

What are some common side-effects of this medication?

Side effects may occur when taking Ustekinumab, but the vast majority of these tend to resolve spontaneously. Common side effects include:

- Injection site reactions like swelling, itching or bruising, which usually subside in 3 to 5 days
- Blocked or runny nose
- Sore throat
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea

Inform your doctor if any side effects persist, if you are unable to tolerate them or the side effects become serious.

Ustekinumab may reduce your body's ability to fight against infection. You should consult a doctor immediately if you develop a fever or feel unwell. Inform the doctor whom you consult that you are taking Ustekinumab as the medication may need to be stopped while you are having an infection.

You may need to have regular blood tests while on Ustekinumab.

What are some rare but serious side-effects that I need to seek medical advice immediately?

The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

Other rare but serious side effects include:

- Signs of infections: fever, chills, painful or bloody urination, feeling very tired or weak
- Signs of lung inflammation: shortness of breath or persistent cough
- Severe headaches, seizures, confusion or visual disturbances

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should stop your medication and see your healthcare professional immediately.

What food or medication should I avoid when I take this medication?

Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications as they may interact with Ustekinumab. These include:

- Over-the-counter medications
- Nutritional supplements
- Traditional or herbal remedies

Pneumococcal, influenza (flu) and Hepatitis B vaccinations are safe and may be given if required. Avoid live vaccines such as MMR (measles, mumps and rubella), OPV (oral polio vaccine), yellow fever or BCG (tuberculosis). Discuss with your doctor before receiving any vaccines. Also, direct contact with persons who have taken oral polio vaccine or those with infections should be avoided.

Avoid eating raw, undercooked or half-cooked food.

How should I store this medication?

Ustekinumab solution for injection is a clear liquid. Its colour may vary from colourless to light yellow and may contain a few small translucent or white particles. Do not use it if the solution contains many/large particles or becomes cloudy or distinctively brown.

Do not shake the pre-filled syringe.

Store in a refrigerator at 2-8C. Do not freeze.

Keep in original packaging or in a black ziplock bag to protect it from light.

Keep out of the reach of children.

How should I throw away this medication safely?

After injecting Ustekinumab, the used syringe should be placed in a puncture-resistant container such as a metal tin or sharps bin. You may bring the used metal tin or sharps bin to the pharmacy or clinic for proper disposal.

Disclaimers

Please take note that the above is not a complete list of all possible side effects. If you have any concerns about your medication or if you have other side effects that you think are caused by this medication, please consult your doctor or pharmacist.

If you take more than the recommended dose, please seek medical advice immediately. The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore. The content does not reflect drug availability and supply information in pharmacies and healthcare institutions. You are advised to check with the respective institutions for such information.

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