

Leflunomide

[Le-floo-NO-meye-d]
Arava®

<http://Rheuminfo.com>
your rheumatology resource

How to use this medication

What is it



Leflunomide is a medication used to treat rheumatoid arthritis. While taking this medicine it is important to have your blood tests done and see your doctor on a regular basis.

Take it once a day



Leflunomide is usually taken as a 10 mg or 20 mg tablet once a day. In some cases, it may be prescribed every other day.

Be patient



It will take 6 to 8 weeks for the leflunomide to work. It is important for you to keep taking the medicine.

What you need to do

Avoid alcohol



Drinking alcohol while taking leflunomide could harm your liver. It is best to avoid alcohol.

Don't get pregnant or breastfeed



Leflunomide can harm an unborn child. If you are having sex or thinking of having sex and could get pregnant, it is important to use birth control. We recommend the birth control pill.

Stop if you have an infection



Leflunomide can make it harder for you to fight infections. It is best to stop taking leflunomide if you have a fever or think you have an infection. Phone your doctor for advice.

Get regular blood tests



Have your blood tested EVERY MONTH. This is important to make sure leflunomide isn't harming your liver or blood counts.

Side effects & important facts

Nausea, diarrhea, & weight loss



- Some people feel unwell with nausea when they take leflunomide.
- Leflunomide can also cause diarrhea. The diarrhea can be severe. If you develop diarrhea call your doctor.
- Let your doctor know if you are losing weight when taking leflunomide.

Blood pressure



Leflunomide can rarely cause an increase in your blood pressure. Your doctor will monitor this. Tell your doctor if you have high blood pressure.

Rash



Leflunomide can rarely cause a rash. Let your doctor know if you develop a rash while taking leflunomide.

Hair loss



Leflunomide can rarely cause thinning of the hair. Let your doctor know if this becomes a problem.

Tingling in the hands & feet



Leflunomide can rarely cause "pins and needles" or tingling in the hands and feet.

Trouble breathing



Leflunomide can very rarely cause an allergic reaction in the lungs. Call your doctor if you develop a cough that won't go away or shortness of breath while taking leflunomide.

When should I call my doctor

Please call if you need to stop



- If you feel sick and want to stop
- If you are concerned about any side effects
- If you want to or have already stopped the medicine

Other reasons to call your doctor:



Diarrhea



Shortness of breath



Rash



Pregnant or Planning Pregnancy



If you are having surgery

Other important information

Stopping leflunomide



You can simply stop taking leflunomide. You do not need to wean off it. Please call your doctor if you stop the medication.