

# Tocilizumab IV

[Toss-ill-IZZ-you-mab]  
Actemra®

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

## How to use this medication

### What is it



Some people with arthritis have too much IL-6. IL-6 is a protein found in the body that can cause pain and swelling in the joints. tocilizumab is a biologic medicine that blocks IL-6 and helps the pain and swelling of arthritis.

### Given by intravenous (IV) infusion



Tocilizumab is given by an intravenous infusion (IV) by a trained nurse. Each infusion takes about an hour.

### Take it once every 4 weeks



Tocilizumab is given once every four (4) weeks.

### Give it some time



Although some patients can feel better quite quickly after receiving the medication, in others it can take a little longer.

## What you need to do

### Get regular blood tests



Have your blood tested regularly (your doctor will tell you how often). This is important to make sure tocilizumab isn't affecting your liver, blood counts, or cholesterol levels.

### Don't get pregnant or breastfeed



Tocilizumab has not been studied in pregnancy. Let your doctor know if you are planning to get pregnant or if you are breastfeeding.

### Don't take if you have an infection



Tocilizumab can make it harder for you to fight off infections. Call your doctor if:

1. You develop a fever
2. You think you have an infection
3. You are given antibiotics to treat an infection

### Get tested for tuberculosis



All patients should have a tuberculosis skin test & chest x-ray before starting tocilizumab. Talk to your doctor.

## Side effects & important facts

### Infusion reaction



Tocilizumab can rarely cause an allergic reaction during the infusion.

### Bowel injury



Tocilizumab has rarely been associated with an injury to the bowel (holes in the wall of the bowel). Let your doctor know if you develop stomach pain during your treatment with tocilizumab.

### Cancer



Very rare cases of cancer have been seen in patients receiving tocilizumab. It is not known if tocilizumab causes cancer. Tell your doctor if you have had cancer in the past.

### Other very rare side effects



Patients have very rarely developed conditions of the nervous system while taking tocilizumab.

### Surgery



Tocilizumab should be stopped before surgery. It can be restarted once things have healed and there is no sign of infection. If you are having surgery, talk to your doctor about when to stop the tocilizumab.

## 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

### Other reasons to call your doctor:



Fever or think you have an infection



If you are having surgery



If you become pregnant



If you plan to get any vaccinations



If you develop a rash