

# Ustekinumab

[You-ste-KIN-you-mab]  
Stelara®

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

## How to use this medication

### What is it



Some people with arthritis have too much IL-12 and IL-23. IL-12 & IL-23 are proteins found in the body that can cause pain and swelling in the joints. Ustekinumab is a biologic medicine that blocks IL-12 & IL-23 and helps the pain and swelling of arthritis.

### Given by injection



Ustekinumab is given by injection once every 12 weeks. The normal dose is either 45 or 90 mg and is based on your body weight.

### Take it once every 12 weeks



You will receive an injection on week 0, week 4, and then every 12 weeks. You, a friend, or a family member can be taught how to give the injections.

### Give it some time



Although some patients can feel better quite quickly in others it can take a little longer. Keep taking your medication.

## What you need to do

### Stop if you have an infection



Ustekinumab 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

### Make sure to get tuberculosis testing



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

### Get occasional blood tests



It is important to occasionally have your blood tested while taking ustekinumab. This is important to keep track of your arthritis and to make sure your blood counts are ok.

## Side effects & important facts

### Injection site reaction



Ustekinumab can rarely cause a reaction (redness, pain, & itching) at the injection site. Tell your doctor if these are severe.

### Surgery



Ustekinumab 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 medicine.

### Pregnancy & breastfeeding



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

### Rare brain problems



Patients have very rarely developed a rare brain problem called RPLS while taking ustekinumab. This is very rare and potentially reversible. Ustekinumab should be stopped if this occurs.

### Cancer



Ustekinumab has very rarely been associated with developing cancer. Tell your doctor if you have had cancer in the past.

## 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:



Fever or think you have an infection



If you are having surgery



If you become pregnant



If you plan to get any vaccinations



Headache, seizures, confusion, or vision trouble

## Other important information

### Stopping ustekinumab



You can simply stop taking ustekinumab. You do not need to wean off it.