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Gentamicin

General information

A guide for patients and carers



What is gentamicin used for?

Gentamicin is an antibiotic used to treat serious infections. Your doctor may decide to give you gentamicin if it is the most effective antibiotic for the type of bacteria causing your infection.

How is gentamicin given?

Gentamicin is not available as a tablet or liquid that can be taken orally. It is given through a vein as a drip over a one hour period. For this reason gentamicin is given by nursing staff in hospital. The dose given to you will depend on your weight and how well your kidneys are working.

What are the side effects of gentamicin?

Like all medicines, gentamicin may occasionally cause side effects.


Kidneys

Gentamicin will be removed from your body through your kidneys and may reduce how well your kidneys work. This will be monitored throughout treatment.

Ears

Gentamicin can occasionally cause damage to your ears. It can present as dizziness/loss of balance, ringing in your ears (tinnitus) or hearing loss. Some of these effects may be irreversible but the dose given will be based on potential risk factors for side effects.





What can we do to reduce the risk of side effects?

During gentamicin treatment, we will monitor kidney function and concentration levels of gentamicin in your blood stream to help to reduce the risk of these side effects.

It is important that you tell your cancer doctor if you are taking any other medicines including herbal remedies/medicines bought from supermarkets or a pharmacy.

To prevent any side effects to your kidneys it is important that you drink plenty of water/fluids during the antibiotic treatment. You must also tell a doctor, ward pharmacist or nurse looking after you if you are experiencing any dizziness, loss of balance or hearing loss.

Other information

This information leaflet has been designed specifically to give you information about your treatment. If you require any further information there is a leaflet written by the manufacturers which is contained in every box of gentamicin. Ask the nurse looking after you if you would like this information. This leaflet is also available electronically through: www.medicines.org.uk. The ward pharmacist/cancer doctor or nurse will also be happy to answer any questions.

How we produce our information

All of our leaflets are produced by staff at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre and this information is not sponsored or influenced in any way. Every effort is made to ensure that the information included in this leaflet is accurate and complete and we hope that it will add to any professional advice you have had. All our leaflets are evidence based where appropriate and they are regularly reviewed and updated. If you are concerned about your health in any way, you should consult your healthcare team.

We rely on a number of sources to gather evidence for our information. All of our information is in line with accepted national or international guidelines where possible. Where no guidelines exist, we rely on other reliable sources such as systematic reviews, published clinical trials data or a consensus review of experts. We also use medical textbooks, journals and government publications.

References for this leaflet can be obtained by telephoning 0151 556 5570.

If you need this leaflet in large print, Braille, audio or different language, please call 0151 556 5570.

If you have a comment, concern, compliment or complaint, please call 0151 556 5203.

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