

# Information for Hospitalised Patients about Tocilizumab/Sarilumab for the Treatment of Covid-19 Infection



Doncaster and Bassetlaw  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

## Background

The Covid-19 virus can cause severe lung inflammation. Steroids, such as Dexamethasone are known to improve the outcome for patients with Covid-19 who are ill enough to require admission to hospital.

## Benefits

Recent results from the REMAP-CAP and the Recovery clinical trials have shown that both Tocilizumab and sarilumab can improve survival and reduce the length of stay in certain hospital patients with Covid-19 infection.

The Department of Health have recommended that doctors should consider prescribing Tocilizumab/Sarilumab for patients with Covid-19 who are very unwell and in hospital with COVID 19\*. These agents are not yet licensed for the treatment of Covid-19 but have been made available for use in certain patient groups matching their use in the above trials.

## About Tocilizumab/Sarilumab

Tocilizumab (also known as RoActemra) and Sarilumab (also known as Kevzara) are biologic medications. They block the action of a protein called interleukin-6 that can cause inflammation.

They have been used for several years to treat rheumatoid arthritis.

They are given as an infusion into a vein which takes approximately one hour.

### They should not be given to people with the following:

- Active bacterial infection
- Tuberculosis
- A history of diverticulitis or intestinal ulceration
- Pregnancy
- Liver disease
- Certain conditions that affect the blood
- Recent use of certain immunosuppressive medication.



## Side-effects

People who have been treated with Tocilizumab or Sarilumab may be more susceptible to infections for up to 3 months afterwards.

### They can also cause:

- Headaches
- Mouth ulcers
- A rise in blood pressure
- A rise in cholesterol
- Transient abnormalities in liver function, white cell count or platelet count
- An increased risk of diverticulitis (rare).

The medical teams will monitor patients for these complications.

## Advice to follow after receiving treatment with Tocilizumab or Sarilumab

People who have been treated with either of these agents should heed the following advice for 3 months afterwards:

- Avoid people with infections. If they have never had chicken pox, it is particularly important to avoid contact with anyone who has chicken pox or shingles.
- Seek medical advice if any symptoms of infection develop.
- Seek medical advice if any symptoms of diverticulitis develop, such as severe abdominal pain.
- Women of child-bearing age should use appropriate contraception to avoid pregnancy during this period.
- Avoid live vaccines. The annual flu vaccine is safe, as are the approved Covid-19 vaccines (Pfizer, Astra Zeneca and Moderna).

\*<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nhs-patients-to-receive-life-saving-covid-19-treatments-that-could-cut-hospital-time-by-10-days>

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

The team are available to help with any concerns/complaints you may have about your experience at the Trust. Their office is in the Main Foyer (Gate 4) of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Contact can be made either in person or by telephone 8.30am till 5.30pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) or via email.

**Telephone:** 01302 642764 or 0800 028 8059.

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