Tocilizumab biosimilar: Patient Information Sheet

**What is tocilizumab?**

Tocilizumab is a medicine used to treat inflammatory conditions such as: rheumatoid arthritis, COVID-19 and giant cell arteritis.

It belongs to a group of medicines called monoclonal antibodies and is administered either intravenously or subcutaneously.

**How does tocilizumab work?**

Tocilizumab blocks the action of a specific protein

called interleukin-6. Interleukin-6 is found in high levels in patients with inflammatory conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis. Blocking the action of Interleukin-6 can reduce inflammation and other symptoms of these conditions such as pain.

**How is tocilizumab made**?

Tocilizumab is a biological medicine. Biological medicines are medicines made or derived from living cells. Biological medicines were first used to treat people with serious illnesses in the UK over 20 years ago and they have improved the lives of millions of people worldwide.

**What versions of tocilizumab are available in the UK?**

Until recently, only one pharmaceutical company made tocilizumab. Now another company make a biosimilar tocilizumab.

**What is biosimilar tocilizumab**?

Biosimilar tocilizumab is a highly similar copy of the original tocilizumab medicine. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines a biosimilar as a medicine that is similar in terms of quality, safety and effectiveness to the original licensed product.

# Are biosimilars safe?

The body in the UK who regulate medicines is the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). All medicines have to pass rigorous tests for quality, biological activity, safety and effectiveness. Biosimilar medicines pass the same tests as the original medicine.

**What does treatment with biosimilar tocilizumab mean for you?**

Whether you are due to start treatment with tocilizumab for the first time or have agreed with your clinician that your treatment will change from RoActemra® to biosimilar tocilizumab (Tyenne®), you can expect the same results.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) produces guidance for healthcare. If NICE recommends the original biological medicine in their guidance, the same recommendation applies to the biosimilar medicines.

All versions of tocilizumab can cause similar side effects. If you experience any problems with your treatment, report it promptly to your treating clinician, nurse or pharmacist.

# What are the benefits of biosimilars?

Many original biological medicines are expensive and the number of conditions they treat is increasing. Biosimilar medicines are highly similar to the original medicines and have the same quality, safety and effectiveness as well as being less expensive.

Therefore, the savings made by using biosimilars allow the NHS to treat more patients.

**Further advice**

If you have further questions about tocilizumab or biosimilars, then please speak to a member of your specialist or pharmacy team.