Nebulised tobramycin for cystic fibrosis

Information for patients
Pharmacy
This leaflet has been made to give you some more information to help you with your treatment. Please also read the manufacturers patient information leaflet (PIL) supplied with the medication.

We have tried to answer as many questions as possible. If you have a question which isn’t included here, please ask us.

**What is tobramycin and what does it do?**

Tobramycin is an antibiotic. It is from a group of antibiotics called aminoglycosides. It is used to treat lung infections with a bug called pseudomonas aeruginosa. It attacks and kills the bacteria in the lungs.

By taking it regularly it keeps the number of bacteria in your lungs down. By doing this it will reduce the number of antibiotic courses you need. It will also help keep your lung function as good as possible.

There are three brands of tobramycin nebulers. One is called Bramitob, another is called Vantobra. There is also a generic brand made by a company called Ranbaxy.

**What is the difference between the brands? Which brand do we use in Sheffield?**

We use all three brands in Sheffield. We don’t think that one of them is better than the other. Some people might find that one brand suits them more than another.

**Why do I need to take it?**

A bug called pseudomonas aeruginosa has been found in your lungs. This bug can cause chest infection (what we call an exacerbation). It can also cause damage to the lungs, making you lose some of your lung function.
Will it get rid of the bugs in my lungs?

Sometimes tobramycin may be used to try and get rid of the bugs. If it isn’t possible to get rid of the pseudomonas in the lungs we say the lungs are colonised with the bacteria. If this happens the aim of treatment is to keep the number of bacteria in the lungs as low as possible. By doing this the lungs are protected from damage and the number of courses of antibiotics you need may go down.

What is an exacerbation?

An exacerbation is an episode where your lung function gets worse and you need a course of antibiotics. You may feel more breathless, you might produce more sputum or your lung function tests may go down.

How do I take tobramycin?

Tobramycin nebulules should be taken through a nebuliser. The Ranbaxy product and Bramitob can be used with an iNeb, an eFlow or a Pari Boy with a Ventstream nebuliser. Vantobra should be used with an eFlow rapid device via a Tolero headset. Tobramycin comes ready to use. It does not need diluting. Your physiotherapist or specialist nurse can advise you on how to use this medication with the nebuliser.

Do I need to use a filter with my nebuliser?

No. Try to use the nebuliser in a well-ventilated room with no-one else in. Tobramycin is not likely to cause any problems for other people but this is to protect other people from inhaling the drug. Try and keep pets out of the room when you are nebulising. However, if you want to use a filter you can. You can buy these from the manufacturer.
How often should I take this medication?

Tobramycin should be taken twice a day. If this is difficult, talk to us and we can discuss different ways of taking it. Tobramycin nebulizers are taken for a month then not taken for a month and alternated like this. Sometimes a different nebulized antibiotic is used in the month off.

Can I mix tobramycin with other nebulisers?

No. Tobramycin shouldn’t be mixed with other drugs. This may stop the tobramycin from working.

Are there any side effects?

Sometimes tobramycin can cause a sore throat and hoarseness. Some people also report a ringing in the ears which goes away without stopping the drug. Nebulized antibiotics can cause bronchospasm. This is when the airways tighten and may make you feel breathless. We will test your lung function before and after your first dose to see if this happens. Sometimes your chest may feel tight after being on tobramycin for a while. Let us know if you think this is happening to you.

For a full list of side effects, please read the patient information leaflet (PIL) supplied by the manufacturer.

I’m not sure if I want to take this. What will happen to me if I don’t?

Your lung function may go down quicker if you don’t take it. You may need more courses of antibiotics.

This is something you need to discuss with a member of the Cystic Fibrosis Team. Try to find out as much as possible about this treatment before making your decision.
I don’t think it works. Can I stop taking it now?

Speak to someone in clinic about this. You may not feel any benefit straight away, but when taken regularly it helps keep your lung function as good as possible. It may also reduce the number of antibiotic courses you need and help to prevent further lung damage.

Are there any alternatives to tobramycin?

There are other nebulised and inhaled antibiotics. Speak to us if you would like to discuss these other options.

What will happen if I don’t take this medication?

If you miss a dose you probably won’t feel any different. If you don’t take tobramycin regularly you may lose some of your lung function. You may need more courses of antibiotics.

If you take tobramycin every now and again the bugs may become resistant to the antibiotic. This is where the antibiotic no longer works as well.

What will happen if I miss a dose of this medication?

If you miss a dose you probably won’t feel any different. Don’t take an extra dose. Take your next dose as normal. If you have problems taking tobramycin regularly speak to us and we may be able to give you help with this.

How should I store this medicine?

All these products should be stored in a fridge at 2-8°C. The drugs should be protected from light so store them in the original container. If the nebulisers are left out of the fridge speak to us and we can let you know if the drugs are OK to use.
I am going on holiday. What should I do with the nebulisers?

Contact us before you go on holiday. We will be able to give you advice about how to store these drugs when you go away.

How do I get a repeat prescription?

You should get repeat supplies from us when you come to clinic. Make sure you don’t run out and let us know before clinic if you need more.

Where can I find more information?

The manufacturer’s patient information leaflet (PIL) contains useful information. The Cystic Fibrosis Trust also produces a fact sheet on nebulisers. This can be found at www.cftrust.org.uk/publications.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

You can get more information from any of the doctors, physiotherapists, nurses or pharmacists.

The clinic telephone number is:

- 0114 226 6281

The pharmacy department has a medicines helpline. You can call this service on:

- 0114 271 4371