Nebulised colistimethate (Colomycin®, Promixin®, or ColiFin®) 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 manufacturer’s 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 colistimethate and what does it do?**

Colistimethate is an antibiotic. It is from a group of antibiotics called polymyxins. It is used to treat lung infections from 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 colistimethate. These are called Colomycin, Promixin and ColiFin. You may also hear it called colistin instead of colistimethate.

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

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

Promixin is used via an I-neb nebuliser. If your doctor prescribes Promixin you will be supplied with an I-neb.

ColiFin is used via an eFlow nebuliser. A specific nebuliser head will be supplied with the drug.
Why do I need to take it?

A bug called Pseudomonas aeruginosa has been found in your lungs. This bug can cause a chest infection (what we call an exacerbation). It can also cause damage to the lungs making you lose some of your lung function.

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.

Will it get rid of the bugs in my lungs?

Sometimes colistimethate 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.

How do I take colistimethate?

Colistimethate nebules should be taken through a nebuliser. Promixin should only be used via an I-neb.

Colomycin can be given via an eFlow or Pari Boy.

ColiFin should be given via an eFlow using an eFlow *rapid* nebuliser head.

Your physiotherapist or specialist nurse will be able to tell you how to use your medication with the nebuliser.
What should I mix the drugs with?

Promixin should be mixed with 1ml of water for injection or 0.9% sodium chloride.

Colomycin should be mixed with 2-4ml of water for injection or 0.9% sodium chloride. This depends on which feels the most comfortable.

ColiFin is supplied with the 4ml vials of sodium chloride needed for dilution.

All of these medicines should be mixed just before you are about to take your treatment.

Can I mix colistimethate with other nebulisers?

All of these brands can be mixed with salbutamol nebules. They shouldn’t be mixed with other drugs. This may stop the drugs from working.

Do I need to use a filter with my nebuliser?

No. Try and use the nebuliser in a well-ventilated room with no-one else in. Try to 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?

Colistimethate should be taken twice a day. If this is difficult talk to us and we can discuss different ways of taking it. Colistimethate is a long term treatment but sometimes it is alternated with another inhaled antibiotic on a monthly basis.
Are there any side effects?

Nebulised 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.

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 intravenous antibiotics.

This is something you need to discuss with a member of the Cystic Fibrosis Team. Try and 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 colistimethate?

There are other nebulised and inhaled antibiotics. Speak to us if you would like to discuss these other options.
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 colistimethate regularly speak to us and we may be able to give you help with this.

How should I store this medicine?
Colistimethate should be kept in a cool dry cupboard. It does not need to be kept in a fridge.

How do I get a repeat prescription?
Your GP may have prescribed this for you in the past. In future you should get repeat supplies from us when you come to clinic.

Where can I find more information?
The manufacturer of this medicine produces a patient information leaflet which contains useful information. The Cystic Fibrosis Trust also produces a fact sheet on nebulisers which is available from 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