

# Mepolizumab for asthma

Information for young people, parents and carers



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## Introduction

This booklet will answer some of the questions you may have about treatment with mepolizumab (known also as Nucala®).

This booklet explains the benefits and risks of mepolizumab as well as what to expect when you come to hospital.

You are the person who is thinking about having mepolizumab, but your parents/carers should also read this leaflet.

## What is eosinophilic asthma?

Asthma is a disease that affects the airways, causing the muscles around the walls of the airways to tighten and narrow. The lining of the airway also becomes inflamed and starts to swell.

Eosinophilic asthma is a type of asthma where airway inflammation is triggered by high levels of a particular white blood cell called an eosinophil.

Severe asthma is when a person's breathing continues to get worse despite regular inhalers and medicines being used.

Some people have severe asthma, some have eosinophilic asthma and some have both.

## What is mepolizumab?

Mepolizumab can help to reduce symptoms and attacks in some people with asthma.

It is available for people who:

- have severe, persistent eosinophilic asthma that is not well controlled with their usual medications

AND

- are aged 6 years or older.

It is an add-on treatment and is used as well as usual asthma medicines.

Mepolizumab is different to other asthma treatments as it has to be given as one injection every four weeks.

We hope that this treatment will help your asthma but you need to be aware that, as with all medicines, it does not work for everyone.

## How does mepolizumab work?

Mepolizumab works by reducing the activity of white blood cells (eosinophils) which can trigger asthma attacks. It does this by stopping a substance called IL-5 from helping the white blood cells grow. This should help to reduce the frequency and severity of asthma attacks, improve your overall quality of life, and mean that you need to take fewer steroid tablets.

## What are the benefits?

Mepolizumab may help to improve your asthma symptoms such as coughing, wheezing and breathlessness. It may take several weeks before you notice any difference.

## What are the risks?

As with any medicine, there is a risk of side effects with mepolizumab. The most common are headache and backache.

The risk of having a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to mepolizumab is very small but we will monitor you on the day unit after each injection to make sure you feel well.

## How is mepolizumab given?

Mepolizumab is given as an injection under your skin every four weeks.

## How can I prepare myself?

We will discuss the benefits and risks with you to decide if mepolizumab will benefit you. We will ask you to complete a diary card and bring it to every appointment. The diary card will show:

- your peak flow
- whether you have had any difficulty in sleeping due to your asthma
- any days of school or college you have missed
- whether asthma has interfered with your daily life at all
- whether you have needed steroid tablets
- whether you have needed to visit your GP or hospital because your asthma hasn't been good.

It is really important that you complete your diary card every day as the information will help us decide if you will benefit from mepolizumab in the long term.

## **What happens after the treatment?**

You will remain on the day unit for two hours after the first three injections, and for 30 minutes after each following injection. This is for your safety and to monitor and treat any allergic reactions or side effects. During this time we will monitor your lung function and ask you to complete asthma score questionnaires.

If you have any side effects at home, please contact your GP or, in an emergency, call 999.

We will review progress after 16 weeks, and regularly after that. If there has been no improvement after 12 months of mepolizumab, the treatment will be stopped.

## **Can I stop my asthma medicine?**

No. Mepolizumab is designed to work alongside your usual asthma medicines and it can be dangerous to suddenly stop your medicines. If your asthma symptoms improve, your doctor may decide to gradually reduce some of your medicines, but they will discuss this with you.

## Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Yes. You will be seen every four weeks for the injections, and the asthma and allergy team will review you 16 weeks after starting mepolizumab. The doctors will decide whether you would benefit from staying on the treatment. This decision will be made partly by looking at your diary cards, partly on the breathing test results and also by discussing it with you and your parents.

It is really important once we start the mepolizumab treatment that you make the effort to fill out your diary cards at home and attend all your appointments.

If mepolizumab does not make a clear improvement in your asthma then it will be stopped.

### Contact us

**Allergy nurses, t:** 020 7188 9783, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. Please leave a message and we will do our best to return your call within 48 hours.

Alternatively, please book a nurse call-back at

**w:** <https://www.zesty.co.uk/practices/childrens-allergy-nurse-helpline>

**Appointments for injections, t:** 020 7188 6390

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** [www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## **Evelina London Medicines Helpline**

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm

**e:** [letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk)

## **Your comments and concerns**

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## **Language and Accessible Support Services**

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## **NHS website**

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health. **w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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