

Patient Information Sheet: Infliximab for IBD

What are the other names for infliximab?

Biologic Class	Generic Name	Innovator Name	Biosimilars
Anti-tumor necrosis factor	Infliximab	Remicade®	Avsola®, Inflectra®, Renflexis®

*for more information on the different names of biologics and what they mean please view the Biologic Summary information sheet.

What is a tumor necrosis factor (TNF)?

Tumor necrosis factor is a protein that circulates in the body naturally. It is used by the body to fight infection by causing an inflammation response. In inflammatory bowel disease, the body appears to produce too much TNF which can damage the intestine.

What is a human antibody to TNF (anti-TNF)?

Infliximab is a medication designed to “soak up” the extra TNF that circulates in the body. It binds specifically to TNF to neutralize its function. The infliximab antibody consists of two parts: a mouse protein and a human protein.

When is an antibody to TNF (infliximab) given?

Infliximab is used to treat patients with moderate to severe Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis. It can be used as a first-line therapy or in those who have failed other therapies. Infliximab is also effective in Crohn’s disease patients with severe perianal fistulas. Infliximab is not a cure but it can induce remission and, when given over the long-term, maintain remission of inflammatory bowel disease.

How is infliximab given?

Infliximab is given intravenously during a 1 to 4-hour infusion. The dose of infliximab varies based on you weight. If infliximab is effective in a patient with inflammatory bowel disease, they may be prescribed it long-term for maintenance purposes.

What are the potential side effects of infliximab?

The short-term side effects are flu-like symptoms.

If you have been exposed to tuberculosis in the past, the use of infliximab may reactivate this infection. To reduce the risk of this happening, prior to starting infliximab, you will have a chest x-ray, skin test, and/or blood test for TB.



Patients receiving infliximab are at increased risk for infections. Any signs of fever should be reported to your IBD health practitioner promptly. It is possible to develop an allergic reaction to infliximab or to experience a localized injection site reaction.

Rare side effects include a lupus-like reaction (persisting joint pain, fever, and rash) and an increased risk of a psoriasis-like rash.

Can I get cancer from this drug?

Like any medication that affects the immune system, there is a very remote risk of developing a lymph gland tumor (lymphoma). Ask your IBD health practitioner to explain this.

Do I need to get any blood tests while I am receiving infliximab?

Yes, your IBD health practitioner will likely request periodic blood tests while taking this medication. Regular follow-up visits with your IBD health practitioner to discuss progress and concerns are highly recommended.

What is the cost of infliximab?

Infliximab is extremely expensive. The cost will depend on your body weight and how much of the medication you require. The majority of patients require insurance to help pay for the medication. This can be either a private insurance plan and/or a provincial/territorial high cost drug plan.