Tays/Gastroenterology
Patient instructions 10.13.56

Infliximab medication (infusion)

Trade name of the medication

Inflectra, Remicade, Remsima, Zessly

Indications

Ulcerative colitis and Crohn’s disease

Mechanism of action

Infliximab binds the chemical mediator tumour necrosis factor alpha, thus inhibiting its action during an inflammatory response. The medicine calms down intestinal inflammation.

Precautions and examinations prior to starting treatment

Before starting treatment, the patient’s existing medication and other medical conditions must be taken into account, contraindications to treatment such as tuberculosis ruled out, and the necessary examinations (X-rays and blood tests) carried out. The patient’s teeth should be treated and vaccinations kept up to date.

Dosage

Infliximab is administered intravenously at a hospital unit providing infusion therapy. It can be the sole treatment for inflammatory bowel disease or used in combination with other medication.

The usual single dose of infliximab is 5 mg per kilogram of body weight. The treatment is repeated two weeks and six weeks after the first dose. After that, the treatment response is assessed, and if the patient has benefited from the medication, treatment is usually continued every eight weeks. If necessary, the dose may be increased or the schedule adjusted. If necessary, treatment is managed with the help of determining the medicine concentration. The treatment is long-term.

Side effects

The patient may experience itching, headaches, symptoms reminiscent of the common cold and changes in blood pressure during the therapy. The symptoms are usually mild and rapidly passing. Severe allergic reactions are rare. Other rare but possible side effects include hives, shortness of breath, headache, vertigo, nausea, an upset stomach and eczema.

Infliximab may increase susceptibility to viral or bacterial infections. The medicine is not to be given to patients with an acute infection or an untreated chronic infectious disease.

Other considerations

Vaccines containing live, attenuated pathogens must not be administered during treatment. When planning surgery, the recommended time is halfway between two consecutive doses of the infusion medication, i.e. usually approximately four weeks before a procedure. The therapy should be resumed after the surgical wounds have healed, usually approximately

one to two weeks after the operation. The nursing staff must always be informed of the medication.

Follow-up tests

Laboratory tests must be taken at the start of the infusion therapy prior to each infusion and thereafter prior to every other infusion for 6–12 months (every 16 weeks with the regular dosage). The tests must cover blood count (CBC), liver function (ALAT), kidney function (CREA) and inflammation (CRP).

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

The use of infliximab during pregnancy is to be individually assessed. Using infliximab during pregnancy is possible. Depending on the clinical status, pausing the therapy for the final stages of pregnancy (the last trimester) may be considered to reduce the exposure of the newborn to the medication. The medication can be used during breastfeeding.