

Generic Name:

Abatacept

Brand Name:

Orencia



How it works:

- Abatacept is a “biologic” medicine developed to treat the overactive immune system & inflammatory process in the person with moderate to severe Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA).
- The immune system is the body’s defense against attack from foreign invaders such as bacteria or virus infections. In people with RA, the body’s immune system mistakes certain normal cells in the body as foreign invaders. The immune cells get turned on and begin attacking healthy body tissues. This immune system process causes inflammation (swelling) of joints and tissues, and will lead to damage if not treated.
- Abatacept is a protein which specifically targets the immune T-cells from being turned on and attacking the body’s healthy joints & tissues.
- Abatacept has been ordered by the doctor to help manage your arthritis. It is used after someone has tried 1 or 2 anti-TNF biologic medications to manage the arthritis. Abatacept is used alone or in combination with other medications to help
 - reduce joint pain
 - decrease length of morning stiffness
 - reduce the number of swollen & tender joints
 - decrease your level of fatigue (tiredness)
 - increase your ability to move joints & do daily activities
 - slow or even prevent damage to your joints.
- Improvement in your joints, your ability to move & energy level may take as long as 3 – 4 months after receiving abatacept.

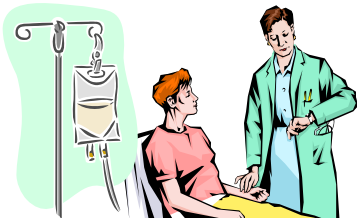
Why take it?



How quickly it works:



How to take:



- You will go to a clinic or have the infusion done in your home. A nurse will place a needle in a vein in your arm and you will receive an IV (intravenous) infusion over ½ hour.
- The preparation, infusion & observation period after the infusion may take 1 – 1½ hours in total.
- Abatacept infusions are done at:
 - Week 0 - initial infusion
 - Week 2 – second infusion
 - Week 4 – third infusion
 - then the infusions are done every 4 weeks to control inflammation (swelling) in the body.
- Dosage:
 - Each vial of Abatacept contains 250 mg.
 - Each infusion of Abatacept is 500 to 1000 mgs based on your body weight.
- Methotrexate or another DMARD (Disease Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drug) is generally taken with Abatacept to increase the effect of the medicine.



Develop a plan for having your infusions:



- Mark your infusion dates on a calendar ahead of time.
- Ensure you have transportation to the clinic.
- Ensure the medication is ordered a week prior.
- Wear comfortable clothing,
- Contact the nurse if you have any concerns before the infusion.

Monitoring:

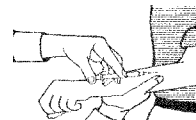
- Prior to starting Abatacept, the following tests are done:



Physical Exam



Blood tests



TB Skin test



Chest xray

Lab tests:



- Do blood tests as ordered by your doctor every 1 – 2 months
 - CBC, platelets, AST, ALT, albumin, creatinine, ESR/CRP

Side Effects:

- A hepatitis blood screening test will be done prior to starting Abatacept

Like all medicines that effect the immune system, Abatacept can cause side effects, some of which may be serious.

Possible side effects

- headache
- sore throat
- upper respiratory infections
- nausea or diarrhea
- flushing of skin, or rash



Rare Serious Side Effects

- **Infusion reactions:**

- Some patients may react to the medication during or shortly after the first infusion.
- If reactions occur, your symptoms will be treated immediately with medication as needed.

- **Infections**

- pneumonia (lung infection)
- bronchitis (lung infection)
- TB (tuberculosis)
- skin infection (cellulitis)
- urinary tract infections
- kidney infection (pyelonephritis)

Managing Side Effects:



Contact your doctor:

- if you develop any of the above signs or symptoms. Side effects can occur any time during treatment and are usually temporary.

Treat delayed allergic type reactions:

(flushing, itching, rash, hives or shortness of breath)

- Take Benadryl 25 – 50 mg every 4 to 6 hours as needed.
- Anti-itch creams (Benadryl, Alveeno or Hydrocortisone .05%) are also available.



Go to the emergency department immediately if you have:

- shortness of breath
- chest tightness/pressure
- swelling of lips, tongue or throat
- or any other serious concern

Illness:

Infections:

- There is an increased risk of serious infections associated with the use of Abatacept. Any infections or fevers should be taken seriously & reviewed by your doctor.
- Do not have the Abatacept infusion if you suspect you have an infection or are being treated for an infection.



Surgery:



Surgery, dental work or other procedures:

- Develop a plan with your doctor on upcoming procedures. It will be necessary to stop Abatacept 3 – 4 weeks before the surgery.
- It is important that Abatacept is not given again until the incision is healed with no open wounds or signs of infection.

Precautions:



Abatacept should not be taken if you :

- have had a previous serious reaction to Abatacept.
- have an active infection.
- are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding.
- have COPD (chronic obstructive lung disease).



Vaccines:

- No live vaccines should be taken while on Abatacept or for 3 months after discontinuing.
- Do not take flu & pneumovax vaccines within 14 days before or after receiving Abatacept.

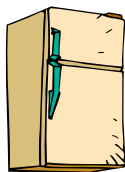


Monitoring Blood Glucose Levels With Diabetes:

Abatacept contains maltose which is a sugar that can cause high blood glucose readings during the infusion.



Storage:



- Refrigerate the medication at 2 - 8°C. Do not freeze.
- Carry Abatacept with an icepack when travelling.

General medication considerations:



- 1. Take your medication as instructed by your physician.**
Taking more medication than is recommended increases your risk of side effects. Skipping doses of medication will decrease the desired effect of the medication.

Once you are feeling better on Abatacept, you must continue to take your other medications, unless instructed otherwise by your rheumatologist.

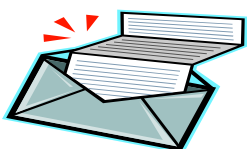
- 2. See your rheumatologist after starting abatacept every 3 to 6 months.** These visits allow you & your doctor to assess how well your medications are working to manage your arthritis, any changes needed in your medications, and to reapply for provincial coverage as needed.

- 3. Keep a diary.**
Record when you take your medications, any side effects & any reasons for changes or withdrawal of medications.



- 4. Keep a medication list in your wallet.**
Record all medications, vitamin/mineral & herbal supplements you are presently taking & any allergies you may have.

Bring this list to all medical appointments with doctors, etc.



Abatacept Support Line:



Clinic Contact:

Orencia Response Program 1-877-979-3200

- A service that helps you find a way to cover the cost of Abatacept.

Name _____ Phone _____

Disclaimer:

This information does not replace medical advice. Specific questions about medications should be discussed with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.