

# COVID-19 Patient discharge information

Please read the following information carefully if you have received treatment with tocilizumab or sarilumab for COVID-19:

## About tocilizumab and sarilumab

Tocilizumab and sarilumab are medicines used to treat severe rheumatoid arthritis by suppressing a protein that is involved in inflammatory processes.

Tocilizumab and sarilumab may also reduce inflammation caused by the COVID-19 virus. Large UK-based clinical trials have shown that tocilizumab and sarilumab improve survival and recovery from COVID-19 in patients with moderate and severe illness.

## What this means for you

By suppressing inflammation, tocilizumab and sarilumab may sometimes decrease the ability of your immune system to fight off infections for up to three months after treatment. You may therefore be at a higher risk of getting infections, or if you have an existing infection, this can be made worse.

Both tocilizumab and sarilumab can also increase the risk of bowel perforation in people with diverticular disease.

Commonly reported adverse effects of tocilizumab and sarilumab include:

- **Tocilizumab:** Infections in your sinuses or throat, blocked or runny nose and sore throat (upper respiratory tract infections), headache, raised blood pressure, abnormal liver function tests
- **Sarilumab:** Low counts for white blood cells, abnormal liver function tests, injection site reactions (include redness and itching), infections in your sinuses or throat, blocked or runny nose and sore throat (upper respiratory tract infections), urinary tract infections

## What you should do

**You should see a doctor urgently if:**

- You develop a fever, chills/shakes, sweats, a persistent cough, weight loss or excessive tiredness within 3 months of treatment with either tocilizumab or sarilumab
- You develop severe abdominal pain
- You develop repeated infections

You should avoid contact with anyone showing symptoms of chickenpox or shingles for 6 months after treatment. In the event of inadvertent exposure, please contact your doctor for further advice.

**You should inform your GP that you have been treated with tocilizumab or sarilumab prior to receiving any form of vaccination.** Some vaccines contain a live, but inactivated form of the bacteria or virus which may not be suitable for an individual with a suppressed immune system.

Women of childbearing potential must use effective contraception during and up to 3 months after treatment.

If you are breastfeeding or planning to breastfeed within 3 months of this treatment, speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

## More information

For more information on tocilizumab or sarilumab, please visit the following sites:

- Tocilizumab: <https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/treatments/drugs/tocilizumab>
- Sarilumab: <https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/treatments/drugs/sarilumab/>