

# Tocilizumab (Actemra) (U.S. Only)



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## What is tocilizumab?

Tocilizumab is a prescription medication, given by injection in the skin, that weakens the body's immune system in order to treat certain autoimmune conditions. It was approved for the treatment of interstitial lung disease related to systemic sclerosis (SSc-ILD) in 2021. Tocilizumab has been shown to slow the progression of ILD in a clinical trial of SSc.

Scleroderma-associated interstitial lung disease, or "SSc-ILD", is a chronic lung disease in which scar tissue ("fibrosis") and/or inflammation builds up in the walls of the air sacs of the lungs in a person with a diagnosis of scleroderma (also called "systemic sclerosis" or "SSc").

## How does tocilizumab work?

Tocilizumab blocks interleukin-6 (IL-6), a molecule that plays a role in the immune system response and inflammation.

## Who should take tocilizumab?

Tocilizumab is approved for use in adults with SSc-ILD to slow the loss of lung function. It is also indicated for joint disease in rheumatoid arthritis, and may be used to treat certain adults who are hospitalized with severe COVID-19.

## How should tocilizumab be taken?

Tocilizumab comes in pre-filled syringes, each containing a single dose of medication. The FDA approved dose for people with SSc-ILD is 162mg injected into the skin, or "subcutaneously", once a week. Tocilizumab is also given by intravenous infusion for other indications.

## How can I obtain tocilizumab?

Tocilizumab is only available by prescription through a specialty pharmacy. A prior authorization will be required by your insurance company before they will cover the cost of tocilizumab. Once approved, the specialty pharmacy will arrange for delivery of your tocilizumab to your home or physician's office.

## Will my insurance pay for tocilizumab?

Insurance coverage will vary by insurer and your individual policy. We recommend that you contact your insurance provider directly to determine your specific coverage. The manufacturer of tocilizumab has set up programs to help patients afford their medications. You can contact the **Genentech Patient Foundation** at 1-800-228-3672 and the **Actemra Co-pay Program** at 855-722-6729. Contact the PFF Help Center at **844.TalkPFF** (844.825.5733) for information about other organizations that may be able to assist with the cost of your medication

## What side effects can occur from tocilizumab?

Common side effects include upper respiratory tract infection, headache, high blood pressure, and reaction at the injection site. Less common but serious side effects can include tears of the intestines or stomach, liver problems, low white blood cell counts, low blood platelet counts, and serious allergic reactions.

There is also a risk of cancer with tocilizumab. Other side effects are also possible. Talk to your doctor if any of these side effects occur.

### **How will my doctor monitor me while I am taking tocilizumab?**

Your healthcare provider should test you for tuberculosis prior to starting treatment with tocilizumab. Your doctor will monitor you for side effects and will perform blood tests periodically. If you have side effects, your doctor might temporarily or permanently stop tocilizumab.

### **What drug interactions should I know about?**

Tell your doctor if you are taking other medications that suppress the immune system as most cannot be given with tocilizumab.

You should avoid “live” vaccines while taking tocilizumab.

### **Are there some people who should not take tocilizumab?**

The safety of tocilizumab has not been established in pregnancy.

Women who are breastfeeding should not take tocilizumab.

Tell your doctor if you have any kind of infection before starting tocilizumab.

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