

Rifampicin and clindamycin for hidradenitis suppurativa

This leaflet aims to answer any questions which you may have about taking rifampicin and clindamycin for the treatment of hidradenitis suppurativa (HS). If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Please read this leaflet along with the manufacturers' leaflets for rifampicin and clindamycin, which will be provided with your medicines. Copies of these leaflets are also available to access from www.emc.medicines.org.uk

(Please be aware that the manufacturers' leaflets may not mention HS – see paragraph below, “Taking an unlicensed medicine”.)

What are rifampicin and clindamycin?

Rifampicin and clindamycin are both antibiotics, which work by killing bacteria that can cause infections. They can be used in combination with each other or with other antibiotics to treat or prevent a number of different infections in people who are at risk of developing these. They are also thought to reduce inflammation. Rifampicin is never recommended to be used alone, so it is important that they are taken together.

The combination of rifampicin and clindamycin can be effective in some cases of HS by reducing inflammation and preventing infections from occurring. Your doctor feels that you would benefit from this treatment and has recommended it for you.

Taking an unlicensed medicine

Rifampicin and clindamycin are licensed in the UK for the treatment of a number of infections. However, their use in the treatment of HS, outside the setting of a flare-up triggered by infection, is 'unlicensed'. Your doctor will discuss with you why they are recommending these antibiotics, so please ask them if you have any questions.

- Read the manufacturers' printed information leaflets supplied with the medicines before you start treatment.
- Take your medicines exactly as directed by your doctor. Both rifampicin and clindamycin are usually taken twice a day when used in the treatment of HS.
- Do not stop taking the rifampicin or clindamycin without speaking to your doctor first, or until your course is complete.
- Rifampicin must be taken on an empty stomach (at least half to one hour before food, or at least two hours after food).
- Clindamycin can be taken before or after food.
- Try to take the medicines at the same time of day to avoid missing any doses.

What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your normal dosing schedule. Do **NOT** take a double dose under any circumstances.

Are there any side effects?

The manufacturers' information leaflets that come with the medicines will list all known side effects associated with rifampicin and clindamycin – please refer to these for further information. Some of the more important or common side effects are discussed below.

IMPORTANT - You MUST seek urgent medical attention if you suffer from any of the following:

- Diarrhoea which is severe, prolonged or bloody. This may be a sign of bowel inflammation (pseudomembranous colitis), which can occur following treatment with antibiotics. If this happens, you must stop taking both the clindamycin and rifampicin immediately.
- Wheeziness, difficulty in breathing, swelling of eyelids, face or lips, rash or itching (especially affecting the whole body). These may be signs of a severe allergic reaction.
- A fever with yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes (jaundice), feeling or being sick, feeling tired and generally unwell, and/or loss of appetite. These may be signs of liver problems.
- Blistering and peeling of large areas of skin, fever, cough, feeling unwell and swelling of the gums, tongue or lips. These may be signs of a serious skin condition.
- Flu-like symptoms including chills, fever, headaches, dizziness and bone pain, shortness of breath and malaise. This may be 'flu syndrome' which can be caused by rifampicin.
- Bleeding or easy bruising, red spots under the skin, black stools, fever, sore throat, mouth ulcers or recurrent infections. These may be signs of a serious blood condition.

Some of the more common side effects experienced by people who take these medicines include:

Clindamycin

- Stomach ache or cramps
- Unpleasant taste in the mouth
- Skin dryness or irritation

Rifampicin

- Reddish coloration of the urine, sweat, sputum (phlegm) and tears. Soft contact lenses may be permanently stained. Do not be alarmed, this is harmless. This will stop when the rifampicin is stopped. Consider wearing glasses instead of contact lenses.
- Headache
- Flushing and mild rash.

It is important to know that if you develop severe side effects, you must stop taking **BOTH** medicines. If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to these medicines, or you have any concerns about side effects, please speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Will I need to be monitored?

We will need to check that these medicines are not causing any serious side effects and you will therefore need to have blood tests at regular intervals. Your kidney function, liver function and full blood counts will be measured after 4 to 6 weeks of treatment and then usually every three months. If you have diabetes, you may need to monitor your blood glucose levels more frequently as your diabetes may be harder to control. Your doctor will be able to advise you about this.

For how long will I need to take these medicines?

You will take the clindamycin and rifampicin for three months and you will then be reviewed in clinic.

Is there anything else I need to know?

Both rifampicin and clindamycin may interact with other medicines. Please tell the doctor who is prescribing them for you about any other medicines you are taking, including herbal or over-the-counter medicines. If you feel concerned, you may also wish to discuss them with your pharmacist.

Rifampicin reduces the effectiveness of different types of hormonal contraception. If you are currently using hormonal contraception, including the contraceptive pill, please discuss this with your doctor. You will need to switch to a different contraceptive method that is not affected by your treatment, and this will need to be continued throughout your treatment and for four weeks after stopping treatment.

If you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant, or are planning on becoming pregnant, please speak to your doctor before taking rifampicin or clindamycin.

If you are breastfeeding, small amounts of both rifampicin and clindamycin may pass into the breast milk. Please speak to your doctor before breastfeeding.

How do I get a repeat prescription?

Your dermatologist will give you a prescription at your dermatology outpatient appointment. If you are stable and are not having any problems with your medications, your GP may be able to prescribe them for you – please check at your surgery. Either way, you will continue to be followed up regularly at the hospital.

Useful sources of information

The Hidradenitis Suppurativa Trust is a UK registered charity dedicated to raising awareness, understanding and support for those with HS and can be found at www.hstrust.org

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment or any side effects that you may be experiencing, please contact the Dermatology secretaries on 020 8725 2500 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). Please leave an answer phone message with your details (including hospital number and telephone number) and brief explanation of the problem. You can expect to be called back the same or the next day between 9am-5pm. Please ensure that you answer calls from UNKNOWN telephone numbers during this time.

Out of hours if you think your problem cannot wait until the next working day, please contact an out of hours GP or attend the Emergency Department if you think your issue is life threatening.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111



Reference: DER_RHCS_01 Published: April 2018 Review date: April 2020