

TREATMENT OF COVID-19 WITH TOCILIZUMAB DURING PREGNANCY OR BREASTFEEDING

Your doctor may consider it necessary to provide you with tocilizumab for the treatment of COVID-19.

What is tocilizumab?

Tocilizumab (brand name Actemra) is a medicine used to treat certain immune conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis. It blocks a protein that causes inflammation.

Tocilizumab may also reduce inflammation caused by COVID-19. Trials have shown that tocilizumab, given as an intravenous infusion, improves survival and recovery from moderate-to-severe COVID-19 for hospitalised patients requiring oxygen. Pregnant people with COVID-19 have a higher risk of becoming very sick compared to those who are not pregnant.

Name:

Date of birth:

Date of tocilizumab dose:

Your baby's National Immunisation Program (NIP) schedule may be affected, particularly for live vaccines

What are live vaccines?

These contain live but weakened viruses or bacteria. They produce an immune response without causing the serious effects of the disease.

Which vaccines are affected?

- ▶ Rotavirus vaccine (Rotarix brand): part of the NIP schedule; given at 2 and 4 months.
- ▶ Rotavirus vaccine (RotaTeq brand): not part of the NIP schedule; given at 2, 4 and 6 months.
- ▶ Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG) vaccine: not part of the NIP schedule; optional.

Does my baby need a catch-up vaccine?

No, catch-up rotavirus vaccines are not recommended for older infants who are beyond the age limit.

What if I'm pregnant (after 20 weeks of gestation)?

- ▶ Pregnant people around the world have been receiving tocilizumab to prevent severe COVID-19.
- ▶ Limited evidence suggests tocilizumab is not harmful to you or your baby.

Recommendation: Babies of people who received tocilizumab during pregnancy (after 20 weeks of gestation) are advised to avoid live vaccines (rotavirus and BCG) in the first 6 months of life. This means dropping rotavirus from the schedule and delaying BCG, where indicated. All non-live vaccinations are safe and should be given as per the NIP schedule.

Actions

- ✓ Inform your GP, midwife and/or obstetrician if you have taken tocilizumab.
- ✓ Update your information on My Health Record.
- ✓ Attend your pregnancy appointments as normal.
- ✓ Take your personal maternity record to all appointments.
- ✓ Book all non-live vaccines for your baby as per the NIP schedule.

What if I'm breastfeeding?

- ▶ Very low traces of tocilizumab are transferred in breast milk.
- ▶ Overall transfer of tocilizumab to breastfed babies is minimal.

Recommendation: Live vaccines (rotavirus and BCG) are safe and can be given to your baby.*

Actions

- ✓ Inform your baby's GP, paediatrician and/or community nurse if you have taken tocilizumab.
- ✓ Update your information on My Health Record.
- ✓ Take your baby's health record booklet to all appointments.
- ✓ Book all vaccines for your baby as per NIP schedule.

* Unless in the first 6 months of life for babies whose parent received tocilizumab after 20 weeks of gestation during pregnancy

More information:

- ▶ [National Immunisation Program Schedule](#)
- ▶ [National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce](#)

This factsheet has been developed in collaboration with the National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce.