



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Oxford Transplant Centre

Having an alemtuzumab (Campath) injection

Information for patients



If your doctor has told you that you need to have an injection of alemtuzumab to prevent or treat rejection of your transplant, this leaflet is for you.

What is alemtuzumab?

Alemtuzumab (also called Campath) is an injection which dampens down the immune system. It is used to prevent or treat rejection of a transplant.

Medicines which dampen the immune system are called immunosuppressants. Alemtuzumab works by getting rid of several types of white blood cells in your body called T-lymphocytes. These cells play a key role in transplant rejection.

Alemtuzumab can be given around the time of your transplant to prevent rejection (as 'induction' treatment), or after your transplant as treatment for rejection. It is used with other immunosuppressant medicines.

The effects of alemtuzumab are long lasting and wear off over the course of 6-12 months. As alemtuzumab is an immunosuppressant medication, you may be more prone to developing infections during this time.

At the time of writing this leaflet, alemtuzumab does not have a UK product license for use in transplant patients, but it is licensed for other conditions. However, it is available for individual transplant patients. It is routinely used in many transplant centres in the UK and around the world, as there is good evidence and experience to show that it is safe and effective.

How will I be given alemtuzumab?

The dose will be given as an injection just under your skin (a subcutaneous injection).

If you are having alemtuzumab at the time of your kidney transplant to prevent rejection you will receive a dose in the operating theatre.

If you are having the alemtuzumab injection on the Renal Day Case Unit or on the Transplant ward, you will be given the following oral medications 30 minutes before the injection, to help prevent any injection-related reactions:

- paracetamol 1g
- chlorphenamine (Piriton) 4mg (antihistamine)
- prednisolone 30mg (steroid).

You will need to be monitored for an hour after the injection, just in case you develop an allergic reaction. If you have already had your transplant, you may need to stay for up to 4 hours after the injection. This is usually because further blood tests are required or medication needs to be organised for you to take home.

You should be able to drive home after the injection, if you have no side effects. You can bring a friend or family member to keep you company or may prefer to have someone available to drive you home.

What should I tell my doctor before having alemtuzumab?

Alemtuzumab may not be suitable for you if you:

- have had a previous reaction to alemtuzumab (or other immunosuppressant injections)
- have an on-going severe infection
- have active cancer
- are or could be pregnant, or are breastfeeding.

Speak to your doctor if any of the above applies to you.

Are there any side effects?

You may experience these side effects in the first 24 hours after the injection. You may have some side effects or none at all.

Side effect	Frequency	Action needed and what to expect	When to contact the transplant team
Rash or redness at the injection site	1 in 5 people	If you are still on the ward, let your nurse know. If you are at home, you can take paracetamol or chlorphenamine (Piriton) (according to the package instructions), available from a local pharmacy.	If the rash does not clear up after 3 days or your symptoms are getting worse.
Chills, shivering, fever, headache	Around 1 in 10 people	If you are still on the ward, let your nurse know. If you are at home you can take paracetamol (according to the package instructions), available from a local pharmacy and other shops.	If you are still unwell after 3 days.
Vomiting or feeling sick	Around 1 in 10 people	If you are still on the ward, let your nurse know. They will be able to give you medication to help you stop feeling sick.	If you start vomiting when you are at home.
Low blood pressure or feeling faint	Around 1 in 100 people	If this happens while you are still in hospital, let your nurse know. You may need an intravenous infusion (drip) to give you more fluids.	If you feel faint or dizzy after going home.
Shortness of breath or wheeze	Around 1 in 100 people	If this happens while you are still in hospital, let your nurse know. We may need to give you extra oxygen.	If you start to feel short of breath after going home.

Who should I contact if I have a problem after going home?

During working hours (9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday) you should contact the Transplant Nurse Practitioners (see page 7).

Outside these hours, you can contact the transplant ward (Wytham ward: see page 7).

If you become very unwell you can call 999 in an emergency.

Will I need to take any medications home after receiving alemtuzumab?

The effects of alemtuzumab on the immune system last for a long time, so you are at increased risk of infection after the injection, particularly in the first 6-12 months. To reduce this, you may need to take an antibiotic medication (e.g. co-trimoxazole) for 6-12 months. You may also need an anti-viral medication for up to 3-6 months. Your doctor will explain how long you need to take this for.

What else do I need to know?

Men and women of childbearing age should use effective and reliable contraception for at least 6 months following an injection of alemtuzumab. If you want to try for a baby after this time, please discuss this with your transplant or kidney doctor or transplant nurse, as your anti-rejection medicine may need to be changed.

Contact telephone numbers

If you have any questions or concerns about the alemtuzumab injection, or any information in this leaflet, please contact us and we will be happy to help.

Transplant Nurse Practitioners

Tel: **01865 228 662**

(9.00am to 4.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Renal Pharmacy Team

Tel: **01865 226 105**

(9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Wytham (Transplant) ward

Tel: **01865 235 010**

(24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALS@ouh.nhs.uk**

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