



Gentamicin

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About this leaflet

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide advice to patients who have been prescribed intravenous gentamicin to treat bacterial infections.

This is to help you to:

- Be more involved in your treatment.
- Understand why we take blood samples.
- Be aware of the important potential side effects of gentamicin.
- Understand the importance of letting the doctor, nurse or pharmacist know if you have any side effects.
- Feel able to ask questions about your treatment.

What is gentamicin and what is it used for?

Gentamicin is a powerful antibiotic that is used to treat certain types of serious bacterial infections. We have prescribed you gentamicin because it is the appropriate antibiotic for your infection.

When serious infection is suspected, doctors aim to give gentamicin as soon as possible. If you are very unwell, we may have to start treatment before you or your family have had a chance to read this leaflet.

If you answer '**Yes**' to any of these questions, please tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist immediately:

- Do you have any hearing or balance problems, or have you (or your relatives) had hearing or balance problems as a side effect from previous antibiotic use?
- Do you (or your relatives) have a mitochondrial disease (mutations in the parts of your cells which help make energy)?
- Are you allergic to gentamicin or any other antibiotics?
- Are you pregnant or breast feeding?
- Do you have reduced kidney function?
- Do you have myasthenia gravis?
- Are you taking any other medicines: including 'water tablets' such as furosemide; over the counter medications; or herbal remedies?
- Have you taken gentamicin before?

How do I take gentamicin?

The nurses in hospital will give you gentamicin as an injection into a vein or via a drip. We may change the dose and how often you take it during treatment.

How long will I take gentamicin for?

Usually you will take gentamicin for up to 4 days. However, some specific infections can require a longer course of treatment.

If you need gentamicin for more than 5 days, your doctor will arrange for you to have hearing and balance tests (see possible side effects).

How will be monitored?

We will take a blood test to measure the amount of gentamicin in your blood to make sure you are on the right dose.

This will also tell us how your kidneys are working. You may also need a hearing and balance test (see possible side effects).

What are the side effects?

Like all medicines, gentamicin can have side effects.

However, most are rare, and not all patients will experience them. It is extremely important that you tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you experience any of these side effects at any time as they could be serious or long-term:

- **Allergic reactions:** including rash, itch, fever, shortness of breath, a tight chest or wheezing, chills or shivers, swelling or redness of the skin .
- Hearing or balance problems, these may include:
 - **Hearing impairment:** you may experience ringing in your ears (tinnitus) or hearing loss.
 - **Disturbances in balance:** you may feel dizzy or have difficulty in keeping your balance.
 - **Visual disturbances:** you may experience jerky or bouncing vision.
- **Reduced kidney function:** you might not have any symptoms but may notice you are passing less urine.

Can I take all my current medicine with gentamicin?

It is important that you tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other medicines, including any medicines you buy without a prescription or herbal remedies. This is because gentamicin does not mix well with some other medicines and in some cases can increase the chances of certain side effects.

Your doctor or pharmacist will review your medicines and advise you if need to temporarily stop taking or change any of your current medicines.

➤ Further advice and information

If you have any questions while in hospital, please ask a member of staff.

When you go home, you should contact your GP, practice nurse or community pharmacist for any further advice if required. If you are ill on a day or at a time when your GP surgery is closed, you can call NHS 24 on 111.

➤ Notes

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