
Nebulised Pentamidine

Pharmacy

**Information for patients, their families
and friends**



What is nebulised pentamidine?

Nebulised pentamidine is a medicine given to people to prevent or treat a type of chest infection called *Pneumocystis Jirovecii* pneumonia (PJP).

You may hear the doctors and nurses referring to this as 'PCP' as it was previously called *Pneumocystis Carinii* pneumonia.

This infection is due to an organism (bug) that can be present in most people's lungs. People receiving long term medicines which affect the body's ability to cope with infections may be more at risk from this type of pneumonia. The symptoms of this infection are:

- a raised temperature
- rapid breathing
- a dry cough.

How is pentamidine given

The information throughout this leaflet is relevant to both adults and children

Firstly, an inhaled medication called salbutamol is given to open the airways. Pentamidine is then also inhaled via a special nebuliser and this process happens every three to four weeks. Air is blown through the nebuliser via a mouthpiece. If you are unable to use a mouthpiece, a face mask can be used. The process will take about 20 minutes.

What are the possible side effects of pentamidine?

Allergic reaction

If you develop any of the following, turn off the air at the wall to stop the nebuliser and inform the doctor or nurse:

- swallowing or breathing problems
- a rash
- swelling of your lips, face, throat or tongue.

Strange taste

It is possible that you may experience a strange taste while using the nebuliser. If this occurs, you can turn off the air at the wall and stop the nebuliser temporarily to have a drink.

Cough, shortness of breath and wheezing

Please inform your doctor or nurse if you have a history of wheeziness, asthma or have recently had a cough, cold or high temperature. The doctor will assess you and may prescribe a different inhaler or nebuliser to open your breathing passages before the pentamidine is given, if it is felt necessary.

Nausea and vomiting

Please tell your doctor if your nausea (feeling sick) or vomiting (being sick) is not controlled or persists.

Light-headedness

If this occurs while you are receiving pentamidine, turn off the air at the wall and inform the doctor or nurse.

Interactions with other medicines

Some medicines can react with pentamidine, altering how well it works. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before giving your child any other medicine, including medicines on prescription from your family doctor (GP), medicines bought from a pharmacy (chemist) or any herbal or complementary medicines.

Important information you should know about pentamidine

Pentamidine has not been tested with pregnant women so it has not been confirmed as safe. There has also been a report of a patient miscarrying during the early stage of pregnancy when she was inhaling pentamidine to prevent of PJP infection. The following guidelines for safety are advised.

- You will be given nebulised pentamidine in a separate room, away from other children and parents.
- It is not advisable for other people to remain in the room during nebulisation, especially if they are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning to become pregnant. You should discuss this with your doctor or nurse.
- If you are a carer for a child and choose to sit in the room with your child, then you must wear a face mask, apron, gloves and goggles.
- Where possible, do not sit your child on your lap because you will breathe the pentamidine in from behind.

If at any point you or your child needs a rest, the air cylinder should be turned off so pentamidine is not blown into the room. Your doctor or nurse will show you how to do this before you or your child has the pentamidine.

Please read this information in conjunction with any patient information leaflet provided by the manufacturer.

Each person reacts differently to medicines so you or your child will not necessarily suffer every side effect mentioned. This information does not constitute health or medical advice and will not necessarily reflect treatment at other hospitals. If you have any questions, please ask your doctor.

Contact details

Infection Prevention and Control Team

020 8661 3917 / 3932

Notes and questions

References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

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Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

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