

Receiving treatment with a bispecific antibody

Advice and information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE
Telephone: 01904 726516 Monday to Friday 8:30am-5pm
Out of hours (Ward 31) Telephone: 01904 726031

Scarborough Hospital, Woodlands Drive, YO12 6QL
Telephone: 01723 342447

What is a bispecific antibody treatment?

Bispecific antibody treatments work by bringing your own immune cells close to the cancer cells and activating your immune system. This helps your immune cells kill the cancer cells. It can be successful even when chemotherapy has stopped working.

What side effects might I experience in the first few weeks of treatment?

Bispecific antibody treatments are generally well tolerated but can have significant side effects at the start of treatment. You may experience side effects as a result of your immune system becoming very active. These side effects can sometimes become very serious.

Before you start your treatment, we will advise you how to monitor your health at home and how to contact us if you are unwell. You will need to monitor your temperature and contact the department without delay if you have a high temperature, become confused or disorientated. With your first two or three doses of the treatment you will be admitted to ward 31 (Haematology ward) for close monitoring.

Side effects:

- **Cytokine release syndrome**

This side effect is very common. It causes high temperatures and can cause your blood pressure or oxygen levels to drop low. You may experience headaches, muscle aches, tiredness and a poor appetite. Fortunately, most patients only have a mild version. It is very treatable if addressed early. Occasionally it can become more serious and can be life threatening. If you develop cytokine release syndrome you will need to be monitored in hospital and may need extra medications to calm your immune system.

- **Neurological side effects**

This side effect is rare but can be very serious. In mild cases it can cause temporary confusion and difficulties talking or writing, which usually lasts for a few days. People may experience a tremor, which may last for several weeks. In the most serious cases it can lead to fits (seizures) or a coma which can be life threatening. This is extremely rare. If you develop neurological side effects, you will need to be monitored in hospital and may need extra medications to calm your immune system.

These side effects normally happen the first two or three times that you receive a dose of the bispecific antibody treatment. To reduce the chances of these effects happening we will start your treatment at a low dose and gradually increase it. You will also receive a dose of steroids (dexamethasone) with each dose. If you have a long gap between treatments for any reason, then these side effects can happen again. Hence we might need to restart your treatment at a lower dose.

Longer term side effects

- **Infections**

Having bispecific antibody treatment means you are more prone to getting infections. These are often chest infections or cold and flu viruses, but other kinds of infections can occur. We recommend that you take aciclovir (to help prevent shingles) and co-trimoxazole (to help prevent chest infections) while you are receiving bispecific antibody treatment. Some patients also take Azythromycin to prevent pneumonia. Sometimes infections can be very serious so it is important you take prompt action if you think you might have an infection.

If you have mild symptoms of an infection during your treatment, for example a chesty cough, we recommend that you **contact the anti-cancer systemic treatment helpline on 01904 726516**.

If you have serious symptoms of an infection, for example a high temperature, feeling dizzy or shivery and shaky, then you must contact our emergency number above, as you will need to be assessed at the hospital immediately and might need intravenous (drip) antibiotics.

We will monitor your blood count and if certain immune cells (neutrophils) are low you will be advised to take G-CSF injections to help boost your immune system. We might recommend antibody infusions if your antibody levels are very low, and you suffer from frequent infections.

COVID-19 infections can sometimes become very serious in people who are having bispecific antibody treatment. If you think you might have COVID please do a lateral flow test and check. You can get lateral flow test kits from most pharmacies and many supermarkets.

If your test is positive then ring NHS 111 and tell them that you are positive for COVID, have a low immune system due to bispecific antibody treatment for cancer and have been advised to ask for community COVID treatment by your specialist team. If you have any difficulties accessing community COVID treatment, then contact your local haematology team as soon as possible.

Vaccination

Vaccinations are an important way to help protect you from infections but might not work as well when you are having bispecific antibody treatment. Most vaccinations are safe to have, but you should avoid live vaccines (for example some versions of the shingles vaccine).

Vaccines can be arranged via your GP surgery.

We recommend that you have:

- A flu vaccine every year.
- A COVID booster each time you are offered one.
- Routine vaccinations according to your age, including the pneumonia vaccine (pneumovax) and the shingles vaccine (shingrix).
- Your GP surgery will be able to advise you when these are due.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact: Danielle Powdrill, Advanced Pharmacist in Haematology, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 721298 or email danielle.powdrill@nhs.net.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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