

Aflibercept Biosimilars

Information for patients, relatives and carers

ⓘ For more information, please contact:

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Introduction

Depending on where you are being treated this leaflet is designed to provide patients with more information about biosimilar medicines, answering some frequently asked questions you may have.

Whether you are due to start treatment with aflibercept 2mg for the first time or are moving from Eylea® brand please be reassured that you can expect the same results.

You can also visit <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/> for further information as well as the Macular Society website: www.macularsociety.org/support/

About Aflibercept

Aflibercept is a medicine that needs to be injected into the eye. It is used to treat eye conditions which affect the retina, such as wet age-related macular degeneration (wet AMD), diabetic eye conditions and retinal vein occlusions. It belongs to a group of medicines called anti-Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor (Anti-VEGF) agents.

If you are receiving treatment with aflibercept or your ophthalmic healthcare professional is recommending treatment with aflibercept, it means your eye contains more than normal amounts of a substance called Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor (VEGF). Too much VEGF causes leaky, abnormal blood vessels.

The excess fluid that comes from these blood vessels can build up in your eye and affect your vision by causing swelling and eventually scarring in your retina. Aflibercept blocks the action of VEGF. By blocking VEGF, aflibercept prevents abnormal blood vessels from growing and stops damaged blood vessels from leaking fluid.

How is aflibercept administered?

Aflibercept is given as a course of injections into the eye. Over time, the injections can stop the growth of abnormal blood vessels and leakage from these vessels. The aim is to reduce swelling, prevent further loss of vision and sometimes improve vision. Your ophthalmic healthcare professional will advise on the number and frequency of injections you need.

How is aflibercept made?

Aflibercept is a biological medicine. Biological medicines are medicines made or derived from living cells. Biological medicines were first used to treat people with serious illnesses in the UK over 20 years ago and they have improved the lives of millions of people worldwide.

Preparing you for the switch to biosimilar afibbercept

What is biosimilar afibbercept?

Biosimilar afibbercept is a highly similar copy of the original afibbercept medicine. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines a biosimilar as a medicine that is similar in terms of quality, safety, and effectiveness to the original licensed product.

Are biosimilars safe?

The body in the UK which regulate medicines is the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). All medicines must pass rigorous tests for quality, biological activity, safety and effectiveness. Biosimilar medicines pass the same tests as the original medicine. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) produces guidance for healthcare. If NICE recommends the original biological medicine in their guidance, the same recommendation applies to the biosimilar medicines.

The Trust has used biosimilar medicines successfully in ophthalmology and other specialties with the same outcomes.

What are the benefits of biosimilars?

Many original biological medicines are expensive and the number of conditions they treat is increasing. Biosimilar medicines are highly similar to the original medicines and have the same quality, safety and effectiveness as well as being less expensive.

Therefore, the savings made by using biosimilars allow the NHS to treat more patients, including being able to treat those who are not approved for the original drug due to cost implications. They also allow reinvestment in ophthalmology services in the Trust.

What versions of aflibercept are available in the UK?

Until recently, only one pharmaceutical company made aflibercept. Now there are other companies that make a biosimilar aflibercept.

How does aflibercept compare to other injectable medicines prescribed for my condition?

Other injectable medicines include ranibizumab (Ongavia®), and faricimab (Vabysmo®). Your ophthalmic healthcare professional will have discussed your treatment options with you and advised which medicine is best for your condition.

Is the injection procedure any different?

The injection procedure is the same the biosimilar also comes in a syringe, however our injectors have received updated training on administration.

What are the side effects?

All versions of aflibercept can cause similar side effects. If you experience any problems with your treatment, report it promptly to your treating ophthalmology clinician, nurse, or pharmacist.

Some common side effects that could occur include:

- Red eye (there may be a bleed or bruise on the white part of the eye at the site of injection, which clears in a week or two).
- Sore and gritty eye (slight ache and discomfort lasting a day or two).
- ‘Blobs’ or ‘small specks’ in your vision (‘floaters’) might be seen for a few days after the injection. You may also experience transient flashing lights or swirls of light immediately after the injection.

The assessment team, led by a consultant ophthalmologist, will review and assess your eligibility for the biosimilar switch.

There will be an opportunity to discuss any concerns or questions you may have. When you have made an informed decision to switch, the clinician will ask you to confirm consent.

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:
Charlotte Smith, Advanced Specialist Practitioner, Lead for Ophthalmology (Community Stadium), Kathryn Ave, York, YO32 9AF.

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.

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.

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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