

## **Leflunomide patient information leaflet**

Leflunomide helps relieve the symptoms and slow down the progress of rheumatoid or psoriatic arthritis; it will not cure the disease.

### **How to take leflunomide**

Take leflunomide exactly as directed by your doctor. The tablets are taken once a day. The usual maintenance dose is 10mg or 20mg once a day.

Swallow the tablets whole with plenty of water.

Try to take leflunomide at the same time each day to avoid missing any doses.

If you do forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember unless it is nearly time for your next dose, in which case skip the missed dose. Do not take two doses on the same day to make up.

### **Getting the most from your treatment**

You should not drink alcohol while you are taking leflunomide as this increases the risk of side-effects such as liver problems.

Leflunomide may need to be taken for four to six weeks before you start to feel improvement. You may continue to feel further improvement over the next 4-6 months.

If you are female you must not get pregnant while you are taking leflunomide.

You should be on a suitable contraception.

If you wish to have a baby within two years of finishing this treatment, you should discuss this with your doctor.

It is important that it is confirmed that leflunomide has been sufficiently removed from your body before you become pregnant.

If you are male you must not get a woman pregnant while you are taking leflunomide. Ask your doctor about suitable contraception. If you wish to become a father after you have finished this treatment, you should discuss this with your doctor. It is important that it is confirmed that leflunomide has been sufficiently removed from your body before you attempt to father a child.

Keep your appointments with your doctor or clinic so that your progress can be monitored. You will need to have regular blood tests and BP monitoring while taking this medicine.

While you are taking leflunomide, and for a while after you stop treatment, do not have any immunisations without talking to your doctor first. Leflunomide lowers your body's resistance and there is a chance that you may get an infection from the vaccine.

Before having any kind of surgery, including dental or emergency treatment, tell the doctor, dentist or surgeon you are taking leflunomide.

## Can Leflunomide cause problems?

Along with their useful effects all medicines can cause unwanted side effects which usually improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine. Speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following side effects continue or become troublesome.

Common side-effects

Diarrhoea

Feeling or being sick,

Dizziness

What can I do if I experience this

Drink plenty of water to replace lost fluids

Eat little and often. Stick to simple foods

Getting up or moving more slowly may help. If you begin to feel dizzy, lie down so that you do not faint, then sit for a few moments before standing.

Make sure your reactions are normal before driving, operating machinery or doing any other jobs which could be dangerous if you were not fully alert

Headache

Ask your pharmacist to recommend a suitable pain-killer

Increased blood pressure,  
loss of weight, mouth ulceration,  
abdominal pain, tingling feelings,  
weakness, tendon inflammation,  
loss of hair, skin rash and itching

If any of these become troublesome, discuss them with your doctor

Important: if you develop any of the following

Difficulty breathing.

A severe mouth or skin reaction.

Unexplained fever, bruising or bleeding.

Jaundice (yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes.)

either

\* Phone the surgery on **01332 667911**

\* Phone the nurse rheumatology line on **01332 787710**

\* or contact **111** service if out of hours/weekend.