

Information Sheet



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Betaferon (interferon beta 1b)

What is Betaferon?

Betaferon (interferon beta-1b) is a type of medicine known as an interferon, which is used to treat MS. Interferons are proteins found naturally in the body, which may help boost the immune system and fight infections.

Betaferon belongs to a class of medicines called disease modifying therapies (DMTs). Betaferon may change the course of your MS. It helps to reduce the frequency, severity and duration of any relapses you may have and can help to slow down the progression of the disease. It has been taken by people with MS for more than 16 years, and there is a wealth of data showing both its effectiveness and safety profile in a broad range of people.

Who is prescribed Betaferon ?

Betaferon is suitable for all uses in all stages of relapsing MS from clinically isolated syndrome (CIS) to relapsing-remitting MS and secondary progressive MS.

- **CIS:** a single clinical event indicating a high risk of developing MS. Betaferon has been shown to delay progression to definite MS.
- **Relapsing-remitting MS:** People with relapsing-remitting MS have occasional attacks or relapses during which symptoms become noticeably worse. Betaferon has been shown to cut down the number of attacks and make them less severe. It reduces the number of hospital stays due to the disease and prolongs the time without relapses.
- **Secondary progressive MS:** In some cases people with relapsing-remitting MS find that their symptoms increase and they move to another form of MS called secondary progressive MS. With this, people find themselves becoming

increasingly impaired, whether or not they have relapses Betaferon can reduce the number and severity of the attacks and slow down the progression of disability.

How is Betaferon administered?

Betaferon is administered by subcutaneous injection (i.e. just under the skin) similar to an insulin injection for diabetes.

Betaferon is taken every other day to ensure a steady level of the active drug in the blood. The drug is administered by the patients themselves after they have been taught how to self- inject Betaferon by an appropriately qualified healthcare professional. Your Betaferon Support Nurse will show you how to inject Betaferon. An auto injector called the Betaject Comfort is available to make giving injections quicker and easier and to reduce reactions at the injection site. With the Betaject device you don't need to see the needle during the injection.

How will it help my MS?

Betaferon has been shown to:

- Slow down the progression of MS;
- Reduce the severity and frequency of relapses and increase relapse-free time;
- Reduce the number of days spent in hospitals due to MS;
- Reduce the amount of corticosteroids needed for acute treatment;
- Reduce MS activity as shown by MRI images of the brain,

Will I be given support whilst taking it?

Yes. When you start on your Betaferon treatment therapy you will be offered the Betaplus Service free of charge and exclusively for patients on Betaferon. As part of this service you will receive specialised personal assistance with your Betaferon therapy. The Betaplus Nurses will teach you how to inject your medication and can help you with any questions you may have in relation to your Betaferon therapy. The nurses can help build confidence, promote independence and provide realistic expectations of MS drug therapy.

As part of the Betaplus Support Programme you will receive:

- Dedicated Betaplus Nursing support;
- Betaject Comfort autoinjector;
- Information material (books, brochures, DVDs etc.);

- Therapy aids such as Betaferon Station, including injection mat, cooling pads and sharps container. All therapy aids are developed for you to simplify the application of Betaferon and enhance your comfort.

What are the side effects?

Like all medicines, Betaferon can cause side-effects although not everybody gets them. At the beginning of treatment, side effects are common but in general they become less with further treatment. The most frequently observed side-effects are:

- **Flu-like symptoms** such as fever, chills, painful joints, malaise, sweating, headache or muscular pain. These symptoms may be reduced by taking paracetamol or steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen.
- **Injection site reactions.** Symptoms can include redness, swelling, discolouration, inflammation and pain. These may be reduced by the use of an auto-injector device.

If any side-effects get serious please tell your health-care professional.

What happens if I miss a dose?

If you have forgotten to give yourself an injection at the right time do it as soon as you remember and then follow on with the next one 48 hours later. Do not inject a double dose to make up for a forgotten single dose.

Betaferon will only be effective if it is taken every second day as prescribed. Betaferon patients are provided with a diary to keep a record of when and where to inject themselves.

How is Betaferon stored?

The medication can be stored at room temperature allowing for flexibility in daily activities and when travelling. There is no need to keep it refrigerated.

If an injection is made up and you want to inject later, the reconstituted Betaferon can be stored in the refrigerator (2-8° C) for up to three hours. After this time you must throw the injection away and make up a new one.

Do I continue to take it if I want to get pregnant?

If there is a chance you could get pregnant, use contraception while you are on Betaferon. Betaferon treatment should not be started if you are pregnant. If you are pregnant or think you may be, tell your doctor. If you are pregnant stop treatment

immediately. Your doctor will decide with you if your Betaferon treatment will be continued or not. If you wish to become pregnant discuss this with your doctor first.

Can I travel with Betaferon?

Yes. Betaferon comes in single-use packs for enhanced convenience when travelling. You don't need to store Betaferon in the fridge which also makes travelling with Betaferon more convenient.

Source:

This information has been supplied by Bayer Health Care

Further Reading:

www.ms-gateway.ie

www.msdecisions.org.uk

Disclaimer:

MS Ireland provides information to the MS Community on an array of topics associated with MS. This information is for reference purposes only and medical advice should always be sought before any treatment or intervention is tried.

