

# Information Sheet

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## Rebif (interferon beta-1a)

### What is Rebif?

Rebif belongs to a class of medicines known as interferons. These are natural substances that transmit messages between cells. Rebif is a highly purified soluble protein, which is similar to the natural interferon beta that is produced in the human body. It has been shown to reduce the number and the severity of relapses and to slow the progression of disability in patients with MS.

### Who is prescribed Rebif?

Rebif is used for the treatment of relapsing MS in adults and also for people who have had a clinically isolated single demyelinated event with an active inflammatory process (CIS)

### How is it administered (can I do it myself)?

Yes, you can administer Rebif yourself, after your first injection is performed under supervision from a healthcare professional. It should be injected subcutaneously (just under the skin), three times a week, with each injection being given at least 48 hours apart. Rebif is available in a multidose cartridge for use with the RebiSmart electronic auto-injector device. Rebif is also available as a pre-filled syringe which may be administered on its own or with the Rebiject II injection device (not available for new MS patients).

Your MS Nurse Specialist or the MySupport nursing service sponsored by Merck can give you advice and training to ensure you can correctly manage your Rebif injections yourself.

### How does Rebif help my MS?

Interferons are produced by the body and play an essential role in the immune system. Through mechanisms that are not totally understood, interferons help to limit the damage of the central nervous system associated with MS. In clinical trials, Rebif was shown to reduce the number and severity of relapses and to slow the progression of disability in people with relapsing MS.

### Will I be given support whilst taking Rebif?

Patients prescribed Rebif are entitled to free support through MySupport if they so wish. MySupport provides a free phone support line and qualified nurses who will

visit you at your home if you choose. MySupport nurses can provide you with information about your Rebif, administration training and tips, and supply of equipment such as travel bags and information leaflets. MySupport is designed to support the treatment and advice that you receive from your Consultant, Specialist Nurse, and healthcare team.

### **What are the side effects?**

Like all medicines, Rebif can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them. The most common are flu-like symptoms (such as fever, muscle aches and headache), depression and injection site reactions. Rebif can also cause changes in laboratory tests, which might not cause noticeable symptoms. The number of red blood cells, white blood cells or platelets may decrease either individually (very common) or all at one time (rare). Possible symptoms resulting from these changes could include tiredness, reduced ability to fight infection, bruising or unexplained bleeding. Liver function tests may be disturbed (very common).

When you start treatment, you may be on a titration regimen. Titration involves gradually increasing your dose to help your body “get used to Rebif” treatment and help reduce the possibility of flu-like symptoms.

You can help reduce injection site reactions by learning the correct injection technique and always rotating the site of injection. Never inject in the same area twice in a row.

It is important to let your doctor or nurse know about any side effects you have. They will advise you on the best way of reducing them. You should not discontinue Rebif without first contacting your doctor or nurse.

### **How do I know if it is working?**

Rebif, like all interferon treatments for MS, is intended to reduce the number and severity of any relapses you have and ideally to stop your level of disability getting much worse. As it is a preventative treatment, you won't notice a difference from day to day. But over time, you may notice that the duration between relapses is longer, or that relapses are less severe, than previously.

### **What happens if I miss a dose?**

If you miss a dose, continue to inject from the day of the next scheduled dose. Do not take a double dose to make up for the forgotten dose. It is important that there are at least 48 hours between each dose.

### **How is it stored?**

The box containing your Rebif medication should be stored in the fridge (between 2°C and 8°C) until you are ready to use one. Rebif should never be frozen. Take special care to ensure your Rebif is not stored near the cooling element in the fridge as this area is often colder than normal fridge temperature.

Your Rebif medication may be removed from the refrigerator and stored not above 25°C for one single period of up to 14 days when needed for such occasions as for travelling. Rebif must then be returned to the refrigerator and used before the expiry date.

- **Rebirect II storage**

Only the pre-filled Rebif syringes need to be stored in the fridge. When not in use, Rebirect II should be stored, in two parts, in its hard plastic case.

- **RebiSmart storage**

RebiSmart should always be kept in its storage box, even when containing a cartridge of Rebif. If refrigeration is temporarily unavailable, RebiSmart containing Rebif multidose cartridges may be stored at room temperature (less than 25°C) for a short period of time (up to 14 consecutive days), after which it should be put back in the fridge and used before the expiry date. RebiSmart should never be stored in, or near, the freezer compartment. RebiSmart should never be stored at temperatures above 25°C.

### **Can I continue to take Rebif if I want to get pregnant?**

If clinically needed, the use of Rebif may be considered during pregnancy. If you become pregnant or plan to become pregnant while using Rebif, ask your doctor or MS nurse for advice. Rebif can be used in breastfeeding.

### **Can I travel with Rebif?**

Yes of course! But the key to a successful trip with Rebif is careful planning and preparation. If you need to travel with your Rebif, it is possible to take two weeks' supply with you, without needing to refrigerate it again, provided you are able to keep it at a temperature below 25°C. If you are travelling for more than two weeks, you will need to travel with the additional Rebif you need in a special cool bag which can be supplied to you through the Rebif post-prescription MySupport patient support line (free phone 1800 409 217).

If you are travelling by car, always keep your Rebif with you at all times. Do not store it in the boot, glove compartment or parcel shelf as it may become too hot or too cold. For Rebif patients who use RebiSmart or Rebirect II devices, remember to always store and carry your device in its protective casing. If you are travelling by plane, it may be advised to get a letter from your doctor or MS nurse specialist to assist you with being able to carry your Rebif medication in your hand luggage, through security and on to the plane.

Don't forget to take your sharps bin with you for safe disposal of the needles and syringes.

For more information about travelling with Rebif, contact your MS nurse, doctor or the MySupport line.

### **How long can I take Rebif for?**

At the present time, it is not known for how long patients should be treated. The decision for long term treatment should be made on an individual basis in consultation with your MS specialist.

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**Source:**

This information has been prepared by Merck Serono Medical Information team.

**Further Reading:**

[www.msdecision.org.uk](http://www.msdecision.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.

This information was prepared by the Merck Serono Medical Information Department at the request of the MS Society of Ireland. For further information, please refer to the patient information leaflet for Rebif, speak with your MS nurse or doctor, or contact the MySupport team on 1800 409 217.

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