

Renal Services

Antithymocyte immunoglobulin (ATG): information for kidney transplant patients

What is Antithymocyte immunoglobulin (ATG) used for?

Antithymocyte immunoglobulin (ATG) is an immunosuppressant medicine. It is used in a small number of patients who show rejection of their new kidney. It is normally used after higher doses of steroids are tried for rejection, or when we know that you have antibodies against your donor kidney.

How does ATG work?

ATG stops your body's production of cells that are part of your immune system. This controls your immune system to stop rejection of your new kidney.

How to take ATG

A nurse will give you a daily ATG injection. This will happen over a few hours. Your calculated dose depends on your weight. You will usually need a daily injection for 7 to 14 days. Your transplant doctor will decide how long you need ATG for.

Side effects

You may experience an allergy type reaction during injections. These are normally mild and include flu-like symptoms, headaches, itching, and changes in temperature or blood pressure.

ATG can cause more serious allergy type reactions, but this is rare. Serious reactions can include shortness of breath due to fluid in the lungs. Our team will monitor you during and after you receive ATG. You will receive allergy treatment if you need it.



Patient Information

You will receive paracetamol, a steroid injection and anti-itch medicine before you receive ATG. This is to help prevent reactions.

ATG can lower your blood test results. This can include tests that measure your white blood cells. This means it is important that you report any unexplained bruising or bleeding to your doctor as this can be a symptom.

Your doctor will monitor your blood tests in clinic.

Important: long-term effects

You are taking immunosuppressant medicines. This means that you may experience long-term health effects. Long-term health effects include increased risks of infection and cancer.

It is important that you follow the transplant team's health advice. Please read the booklet that they give you. It provides important information that you need.

You should not be vaccinated with 'live' vaccines. The transplant team or pharmacist can advise you on vaccines that are safe for you.

ATG is a strong immunosuppressant. This means you may be told to reduce or stop other immunosuppressant medicines, for example, tacrolimus during the ATG course. Your transplant doctor will advise you when to restart your regular immunosuppressants.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 7777 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

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