



ABATACEPT

What are Biologics?

- Biologics are a new class of DMARD (Disease Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drug) which have been available for over 10 years now.
- Biologics are most commonly used in the treatment of inflammatory arthritis including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis & ankylosing spondylitis. However, they have also been used to try to treat a variety of other autoimmune rheumatic conditions.

What is Abatacept?

- Abatacept (Orencia) is a biologic, a newer class of DMARD (Disease Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drug).
- While in the class of biologics like TNF antagonists, Abatacept does not work in the same way. Abatacept is primarily used in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis.

What is the typical dose? How often do you take them?

- Abatacept is given through an intravenous infusion, with the dose based on body weight. It is given at 0, 2, and 4 weeks and thereafter monthly.
- Abatacept is also given through a subcutaneous (under the skin) injection on a weekly basis. Many patients are able to do this themselves.

How does Abatacept work?

- The immune system is made up of many different parts. By interfering with the correct part, it is possible to decrease the inflammation being caused by rheumatoid arthritis and similar diseases.
- Abatacept interferes with the immune system's ability to communicate between certain types of cells, thereby blocking their action and modulating the immune system's response. This decreases inflammation, reduces pain, and improves function.

How soon will I feel the effects of Abatacept?

- Abatacept can take at least 1-3 months before starting to gain benefit.

If I start Abatacept, can I stop all my other DMARDs?

- Most rheumatologists will suggest you continue with at least methotrexate, assuming you have not had side effects, in addition to most Biologics, including Abatacept. Studies have shown that Biologics work significantly better when combined with methotrexate.
- Keep in mind: In most instances, your rheumatologist has recommended you start a Biologic because your inflammatory arthritis has not been well controlled. It is important to try to control your disease as best as possible first, which may mean continuing all DMARDs for some time, before trying to decrease them.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

- If you miss your dose, let your physician know right away to see if they can arrange a new infusion time, if appropriate to do so.

What are the possible side effects of Abatacept?

Side Effect	Ways to Reduce Side Effects
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| • Intravenous Infusion Reactions | • If severe, the medication is stopped. However, certain medications can be given to prevent similar reactions from re-occurring. |
| • Abatacept may increase your risk of developing severe infections, particularly lung infections. | • Let your physician know if you are sick when you are supposed to receive your infusion. They may discuss postponing your infusion until you are better.
• Fevers and other severe illness should not be ignored. Discuss this with your doctor. |
| • Medication Interactions | • Discuss vaccinations with your rheumatologist.
• Live vaccines should be given prior to starting Abatacept. |

For more information about abatacept, or for questions that are specific to your situation, always consult your physician.