

GENTAMICIN – YOUR HEARING AND BALANCE INFORMATION and ACTION LEAFLET

Introduction

This leaflet has been prepared to give you more information about gentamicin. Read this alongside the Manufacturers Patient Information Leaflet which is available from the nursing staff. If you have any questions, or there is anything that is unclear, then ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist to explain.

What is Gentamicin?

Gentamicin is an antibiotic that is usually given as an injection into a vein. It is used to treat serious bacterial infections including those of the urinary tract (in the kidneys or bladder), abdomen (affecting the gall bladder or causing diverticulitis) and blood (such as bacteraemia or septicaemia).

How can Gentamicin affect my hearing and balance?

All medicines can occasionally cause side effects. Gentamicin can sometimes cause damage to the hearing and balance mechanism inside your ears. This may make you dizzy or cause you to lose your balance. Sometimes it can cause a ringing in your ears (“tinnitus”) or hearing loss. In some patients these effects may be irreversible. The risk of these effects happening is rare and is different for each patient and depends on a number of factors as explained below.

What can be done to reduce the chance of this happening?

It is important to tell your nurse or doctor if you have any current ear or balance problems. Also inform them if you have had any kidney problems with gentamicin before. Your doctor will discuss the risks and benefits of treatment with you and may decide to use a different antibiotic.

Before and during treatment with gentamicin, your doctor will take regular blood tests to check your kidney function. Similar tests are also necessary to measure the amount of gentamicin in your blood stream; these are usually done at the same time as blood tests for your kidney function.

Taking other medicines

Your doctor might review any other medicines you are taking which may also affect your hearing or balance. Remember to tell your doctor if you are taking any medicines you buy for example, at a garage, newsagent, supermarket or chemist, such as medicines for coughs, colds or flu and decongestants and herbal remedies Your doctor should discuss this with you and may ask you to stop taking these temporarily while you are on Gentamicin.

Make sure you tell your doctor, pharmacist, dentist or nurse when you see them that you are on gentamicin.

Tell a doctor, nurse or pharmacist straight away if:
You notice any change in your balance; dizziness; blurred vision; inability to focus your eyesight; a ringing in your ears; or hearing loss.

NHS Highland Pharmacy Departments:

Raigmore Hospital, Inverness. IV2 3UJ. Tel: 01463 704 000
Caithness General Hospital, Wick. KW1 5NS. Tel: 01955 605050
Belford Hospital, Fort William. PH33 6BS. Tel: 01397 702481
Lorn and Islands Hospital, Oban. PA34 4HH. Tel: 01631 567500

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact us at the department above.