



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Aminoglycosides– your hearing and balance

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Name of your aminoglycoside:

① For more information, please contact:

Medicines Information

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What are aminoglycosides used for?

Aminoglycosides are a family of antibiotics which include Gentamicin, Tobramicin. They are used to treat a range of serious bacterial infections including those of the urinary tract (e.g. kidneys or bladder), pulmonary (lung) and blood (bacteraemia or septicaemia).

Why is Aminoglycoside the antibiotic for you?

Aminoglycosides are strong and effective antibiotics which is less likely to lead to C. Diff or MRSA* than following some other antibiotics. They are important drugs as bacteria do not easily become resistant to them. Aminoglycosides are very useful when rapid control of a serious infection is required.

How is aminoglycosides given?

They are usually given into a vein; it can be given either as a slow injection or via a drip (infusion). The frequency of gentamicin infusions given to you will depend on the type of the infection, your age, height, body weight and how well your kidneys are working.

* Clostridium Difficile or Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus

How can aminoglycosides affect my hearing and balance?

Like all medicines, aminoglycosides may occasionally cause side effects, sometimes causing damage to the hearing and balance mechanism inside your ears. This may make you dizzy or 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 and also if you have any kidney problems so that these factors can be taken into account with your treatment plan. This could increase your risk of developing problems with gentamicin and we would reassess your treatment. In this situation your doctor will discuss the risks and benefits of treatment with you.

The amount of aminoglycoside in your blood will be measured regularly to check that the correct blood levels have been achieved. Your doctor will also carry out blood tests to check your kidney function before and during treatment with aminoglycosides.

Your doctor might review any other medicines you are taking which may also affect your hearing or balance. Your doctor should discuss this with you and may ask you to stop taking these temporarily, while using aminoglycosides.

If your treatment is planned rather than in an emergency situation it may be possible to test to see if you have a genetic likelihood to experience aminoglycoside side effects. You should discuss this with your doctor.

Who can I speak to if I have any questions?

The doctors, nurses or pharmacists looking after you will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Is there anything that I can do to help?

We will check all the medicines you are taking when you come into hospital; however it is important that you tell your doctor if you are taking any other medicines, including over the counter medications or herbal remedies, because aminoglycosides and other medicines you may be taking can sometimes affect each others action.

Before starting a course of an aminoglycoside

It is extremely important that you tell your doctor or nurse if you already have problems with your hearing, balance or kidneys as this could increase your risk of developing problems with gentamicin.

Whilst you are receiving a course of aminoglycosides

It is equally important that you inform your nurse, doctor or pharmacist if whilst being treated with gentamicin, you experience any problems which may be caused by damage to the ear, such as difficulty keeping your balance, dizziness, a ringing in your ears or hearing loss.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Phil Parris, telephone (01904) 721395 or email

Phillip.paris@york.nhs.uk.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

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或發電

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