

Treatments for MS:

Plegridy[®] (peginterferon beta-1a (rch))

There is a range of disease modifying therapies approved for people with MS in Australia. These therapies, also called immunotherapies, work to reduce disease activity in the central nervous system and reduce the frequency and severity of relapses in people with MS.

What is Plegridy[®] and how does it work?

Plegridy[®] is pegylated interferon beta-1a. Pegylation is a common technology that can increase the circulating life of a molecule in the body (in this case, interferon beta-1a), to prolong the duration of effect of the product. Interferons are proteins produced naturally in the human body to help fight infections and regulate the immune system. Beta interferons have been shown to slow down activity and disease progression in MS. They do this by helping regulate the immune system, reducing attacks on myelin or nerves. During clinical trials¹, Plegridy has been shown to have comparable effectiveness to the currently available interferon beta agents. Additional data from the trial also suggested a significant reduction in brain lesion load as visible by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

How is Plegridy[®] administered?

Plegridy[®] is a subcutaneous (under the skin) injectable therapy that is pegylated to extend its half-life in the body. This means it needs to be injected only once every two weeks rather than more regularly as compared with other interferon beta agents. The treatment comes in the form of a single-use, pre-filled injection pen.

It is usually recommended that the dose is gradually increased (titrated) when first starting to use Plegridy[®].

You will receive a month's supply in a pack, which will consist of two pens. The initiation pack contains a 63 microgram (orange) pen for your first injection and a 94 microgram (blue) pen for your second injection 14 days later. For subsequent injections, you will need to obtain the continuation pack that contains two 125 microgram (grey) pens.

What are the potential side effects of Plegridy[®] treatment?

Plegridy[®] helps most people with MS, but it may have side effects in some people.

Tell your doctor immediately, or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital if any of the following happen: yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes (jaundice); itching all over; feeling sick, being sick (nausea and vomiting); easy bruising of the skin; loss of appetite, tiredness, sleepiness, confusion, bleeding more easily than normal, dark coloured urine, and pale stools.

The list above includes serious side effects that may require medical attention. Serious side effects are rare. The most common side effect is to feel 'flu-like' symptoms, e.g. headache, tiredness, muscle aches, joint pain, shivering and fever.

Other side effects may also occur in some patients – tell your doctor if you notice anything else that is making you feel unwell.

How much does Plegridy® cost?

Plegridy® has been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and is available through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Please discuss with your neurologist whether Plegridy® is the right treatment for you. Your neurologist will need to obtain an authority to prescribe the medication for you. There are a number of criteria you must meet before your doctor can receive authority to write this prescription.

For details of the criteria required to receive a prescription for Plegridy® treatment through the PBS, please visit the official PBS website at:

<http://www.pbs.gov.au/medicine/item/10218T> - 63 & 94 microgram pens

<http://www.pbs.gov.au/medicine/item/10212L-10220X> - 125 microgram pens

You will need to click on the red **Authority Required (STREAMLINED)** link.

If you are eligible for medications through the PBS, you will need to pay a contribution fee each time your prescription is dispensed. The Federal Government pays for the remaining cost. The amount of the contribution fee depends upon whether or not you have a pension or concession card. The amount of this fee is set each year by the Federal Government.

Further information about the PBS, your entitlements and details regarding the PBS safety net (which protects patients and their families requiring a large number of PBS items) is available through the Medicare Australia website at: www.medicare.gov.au

If you are not eligible for Plegridy® through the PBS, for example if you are a visitor from overseas, your neurologist may write a private prescription. In this instance you will have to pay the full cost to the pharmacy that dispenses your medication. You will need to request a quote from your pharmacist for the price of any medication which is not subsidised by the PBS.

General information

Most pharmacies do not keep Plegridy® in stock. It is therefore important to let your pharmacist know a few days before you need the medication so that they can order it in for you.

Plegridy® pre-filled injection pens should be stored in the closed original carton to protect from light until ready for injection. Store in a refrigerator between 2 to 8°C. Do not freeze. Discard if frozen. When no refrigerator is available, Plegridy® may be stored protected from light between 2°C to 25°C for a maximum of 30 days in total. If the outside temperature is warm it is a good idea to take your medication home in an ice cooler. Your pharmacist may be able to assist with this.

Biogen runs a Patient Support Program called MS Alliance. The website for MS Alliance is www.msalliance.com.au and the toll free helpline is 1800 286 639.

Plegridy® is manufactured by:
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Ph: 02 8875 3900

For more information on MS and other MS treatments

- Speak to your neurologist about what treatment best suits your individual circumstances.
 - MS Nurses can also provide information, training and ongoing support in managing your immunotherapy.
 - For information about MS, MS treatment and to find contact details for your state MS organization visit www.msaustralia.org.au
 - MS Research Australia provides information on the latest research and clinical trials at www.msra.org.au
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References

1. Plegridy® Approved Product Information, August 2016.
<https://www.ebs.tga.gov.au/ebs/picmi/picmirepository.nsf/pdf?OpenAgent&id=CP-2014-PI-03272-1>
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Note:

MS Australia does not recommend any specific disease-modifying treatment for people living with MS. Decisions about any treatments, taking into consideration the potential benefits and side effects for each individual's circumstances, should be made in careful consultation with the person's neurologist.

The information supplied in this document is collated from material provided by the relevant pharmaceutical company, MIMS (<http://www.mims.com.au>) and MS Research Australia.