



## **USTEKINUMAB**

### **What are the aims of this leaflet?**

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about ustekinumab (Stelara™). It tells you what it is, how it works, how it is used to treat skin conditions, and where you can find out more about it.

### **What is ustekinumab and how does it work?**

Ustekinumab is a powerful drug that has been specially designed to mimic normal human molecules, and for this reason it is classed as a “biological” drug. It reduces skin inflammation by reducing the activity of chemical “cytokines” in the body called interleukin (IL) 12 and 23. Cytokines are chemicals that send messages to other cells that trigger inflammation in psoriasis.

### **Which conditions are treated with ustekinumab?**

Ustekinumab is used to treat moderate to severe plaque psoriasis in adults.

### **Why have I been selected for treatment with ustekinumab?**

Ustekinumab is only used for patients with moderate to severe psoriasis who cannot take standard treatments for psoriasis (such as methotrexate, ciclosporin, ultraviolet light therapy, and other biological injections) either because they do not work, cannot be tolerated or the treatment is not suitable. There are national guidelines that assist dermatologists in identifying those patients that might benefit from and are eligible for ustekinumab.

### **How long will I need to take ustekinumab before it has an effect?**

Ustekinumab does not work immediately. It may be 3-12 weeks before you notice any benefit. In clinical trials, about 67% of patients achieved a good response (which means a 75% improvement) after 4 months' treatment.

## How do I take ustekinumab?

Ustekinumab is supplied as a sterile solution in a single-use 2 ml vial, which should be drawn up into a syringe and injected under the skin of the stomach, thighs or upper outer arms. A nurse or doctor will demonstrate how to inject yourself and details are also given in the drug package insert. It must be stored in a refrigerator (at 2-8 °C) and the vial must remain within the cardboard box to protect it from the light. If you wish to travel with ustekinumab, you will need to purchase a cool box or cool bag with icepacks to maintain these temperatures. You will be provided with sharps bins so that you can dispose of your syringes and needles safely.

## What dose should I take?

The dose of ustekinumab for an adult patient with psoriasis weighing up to 100 kg is 45 mg (one injection) at week 0, one injection at week 4 and then an injection once every 12 weeks from then on. For patients weighing more than 100 kg, the dose is 90 mg (two injections) and is given at the same times as the lower dose (i.e. week 0, week 4, and then every 12 weeks from then on). Your response to treatment after four months will be measured by your dermatologist. If there is a good response, the treatment will then normally be continued to maintain improvement with an injection once every 12 weeks.

## What are the possible side effects of ustekinumab?

### Mild and common

- Reactions at the injection sites. These are usually mild and include redness, a rash, swelling, itching, or bruising. They usually go away within 3 to 5 days. If you have pain, redness or swelling around the injection site that does not go away or gets worse, you should contact your doctor.
- Upper respiratory infections, for example, sinus infections. Try to avoid close contact with anyone with a bad cold, influenza or chest infections, and wash your hands frequently when taking this medication.
- Headaches, dizziness, rash, diarrhoea
- Depression, fatigue

### Potentially severe

- Serious infections. Ustekinumab may decrease your ability to fight infection. Inform your doctor of any current or past infection (particularly tuberculosis), or if you are prone to infections such as cold sores or cystitis. Also tell your doctor if you have or have ever had any disease that affects your immune system, such as cancer, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection or viral hepatitis.

- Allergic reactions. Some patients have had allergic reactions to ustekinumab. If you develop a severe rash, a swollen face, or difficulty with breathing while taking ustekinumab, attend a hospital A & E department and make sure that your dermatologist is informed.
- Cancers. Many drugs that decrease the activity of the immune system can increase the chance of getting a cancer. The risk is not exactly known now, but is likely to be low. Your dermatologist should be consulted if you have any concerns about new skin lesions.
- Avoid dairy foods that are not pasteurised. Camembert, Brie and blue cheeses, pâté or eggs, meat or poultry that are not adequately cooked pose a risk of salmonella infection. Contact your doctor if you get an infection, or any symptom or sign of an infection, including: a fever, lethargy, a cough, influenza-like symptoms, warm, red or painful skin, swollen glands or open sores on your body.

Before you start taking ustekinumab, your dermatologist will go through a medical checklist for the following:

- Tuberculosis or close contact with someone who has had it. If you develop any symptoms of tuberculosis (e.g. a dry cough that doesn't go away, weight loss, fever, night sweats) call your doctor. You will need to be examined for tuberculosis and have a skin test.
- Hepatitis or an HIV infection, or if you think you are at risk of having these.
- If you are scheduled to have major surgery.
- If you are scheduled to have any type of vaccination.

### **What will happen if I need an operation or dental surgery?**

Ustekinumab may increase your risk of getting an infection after a surgical procedure. You must tell the doctor or dentist that you are taking ustekinumab before the operation or dental surgery.

### **How will I be monitored for the side effects of ustekinumab treatment?**

You will probably have a chest X-ray and blood tests before treatment starts; blood checks need only be repeated 3 months after commencing ustekinumab, and then every 3-6 months. Monitoring your response and looking out for side effects will take place at regular clinic visits.

### **The BAD Biologic Interventions Register (BADBIR)**

Because ustekinumab treatment for psoriasis is relatively new, you will be invited to take part in a national register if it is prescribed for you. This register will collect valuable information on side effects and treatment benefits and will help inform doctors on how best to use ustekinumab and similar drugs. No information will be passed to the register without your informed consent.

### **Can I have immunisations (vaccinations) whilst on ustekinumab?**

You should not receive any of the 'live' vaccines such as those for measles, mumps and rubella (German measles), yellow fever and polio (there is, however, an 'inactivated' polio vaccine available). 'Inactivated' vaccines are safe, although they may not work as well if you are on a biological treatment such as ustekinumab. If you require immunisation with a live vaccine, ustekinumab should be stopped for at least 15 weeks before and until 2 weeks after the vaccination. Pneumovax and annual influenza (including swine flu) vaccinations are safe and are recommended.

### **Does ustekinumab affect pregnancy?**

Ustekinumab has not been used in pregnant women or nursing mothers, and so we do not know what its effects are on unborn children or babies who are being breast fed. You should avoid getting pregnant on this treatment. Please tell your doctor if you become pregnant or are thinking about becoming pregnant.

### **May I drink alcohol while I am taking ustekinumab?**

There is no known interaction between alcohol and ustekinumab but it is well recognised that alcohol can make your psoriasis worse.

### **Can I take other medicines at the same time as ustekinumab?**

Most medicines are safe to take with ustekinumab. However, it is important that your GP and other doctors are aware that you are taking it if any new medicine is prescribed. Your GP and dermatologist should be aware of all your medications, including ones you buy at a pharmacy or health shop, including supplements and herbal medicines. If you are taking other immunosuppressant medicines (medicines which suppress the immune system) this should be discussed with your dermatologist

### **Can I sunbathe?**

Sunbeds and sunbathing should be avoided to reduce the risk of skin cancer.

### **Where can I find out more about ustekinumab?**

This information sheet does not list all of the side effects of ustekinumab. If you want to know more about ustekinumab, or if you are worried about your treatment, you should speak to your doctor, specialist nurse or pharmacist. For fuller details, look at the drug information sheet which comes as an insert with your prescription for ustekinumab.

**This leaflet aims to provide accurate information about the subject and is a consensus of the views held by representatives of the British Association of Dermatologists: its contents, however, may occasionally differ from the advice given to you by your doctor.**

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF DERMATOLOGISTS  
PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET  
PRODUCED JANUARY 2010**