

Leflunomide, ARAVA®, LEFLUNOMIDE® – in the treatment of rheumatic diseases

Indications

Leflunomide is used for treatment of indications such as rheumatoid arthritis and arthritic psoriasis.

Drug product and mode of action

Leflunomide, which belongs to the class of cytostatic drugs, soothes joint inflammation and prevents it from progressing.

Dosage and method of administration

Leflunomide is available as 20 mg tablets. The most common dosage is one tablet once a day. In some cases, the dosage may be one tablet every other day. Leflunomide is taken with water, preferably with meals, always at the same time of the day.

Adverse effects

The most common adverse effects are diarrhoea, nausea, abdominal discomfort and skin rash. The adverse effects often diminish as treatment continues. Leflunomide may increase susceptibility to infections. The drug is not given during a severe infection. It may cause elevation of liver enzymes and a decrease in white blood cells or blood platelets. At a later stage, hair loss or weight loss may occur in rare cases. It is recommended that alcohol should be avoided.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

Leflunomide must not be used during pregnancy and breastfeeding. It is recommended that the drug is stopped two years before pregnancy. If necessary, elimination of leflunomide from the body may be speeded up by using cholestyramine (Questran®).

Follow-up

Safety tests are taken **2–3, 6 and 12 weeks after onset of treatment, and then once every 3–6 months**. The results are checked at the health centre. The safety tests include the following: **Basic blood count, B-NEUT and ALT. CREA, U-ChemScr, CRP and ESR** are measured in connection with treatment assessment before doctor's appointment every 6–12 months. Additional safety tests are taken 2-3 weeks after a dose increase. Blood pressure should be monitored during treatment.

Other considerations

Leflunomide does not need to be stopped for surgery. During treatment, vaccines that contain live attenuated organisms can be given with discretion. Before the onset of treatment, please check that your vaccinations are up to date.

Link [Reumalääkkeiden ohjeet | Reumatalo.fi | Terveyskylä.fi](#) (in Finnish)

Satasairaala Wellbeing services county of Satakunta
[For Satasairaala's website, go to www.satasairaala.fi](http://www.satasairaala.fi)