

BC PharmaCare Drug Information

The drug below is being considered for possible coverage under the B.C. PharmaCare program. PharmaCare is a government-funded drug plan that helps British Columbians with the cost of eligible prescription drugs and specific medical supplies. For more information on PharmaCare, visit [Ministry of Health - PharmaCare](#).

PharmaCare reviews each drug for treating a specific illness or medical condition (known as an “indication”). If a decision is made to cover the drug, it will be only for that illness or condition.

In some cases, PharmaCare may cover a drug only for people who have the illness or condition and have not responded to other drugs used to treat that illness or condition.

For more information on PharmaCare’s drug coverage review process, see the last page of this information sheet.

Information about the drug	
Generic name (scientific name)	tocilizumab
Brand name	Actemra®
Manufacturer	Hoffmann-La Roche Limited
Indication	Giant Cell Arteritis
Has the drug been reviewed by the Common Drug Review (CDR)? (see the note below this table.)	Yes For more information about the CDR’s review of tocilizumab (Actemra), you can Search the CDR Reports .
Public input start date	Wednesday January 24, 2018
Public input closing date	Wednesday February 21, 2018 AT MIDNIGHT
How is the drug taken?	Actemra is administered by subcutaneous (under the skin) injection.
How often is the drug is taken?	Actemra is administered once per week.
General drug and/or drug study information	<p>Giant Cell Arteritis (GCA) is a chronic vasculitis (destroys blood vessels by inflammation) of medium and large blood vessels. GCA occurs almost exclusively in patients aged 50 years and older.</p> <p>Symptoms of GCA include: headache, fatigue, temporary or permanent vision loss, jaw claudication (pain associated with chewing), scalp tenderness, aortic arch syndrome, and polymyalgia rheumatica (PMR) (an inflammatory disorder that causes muscle pain and stiffness, especially in the shoulders.)</p> <p>Actemra is a medicine that helps keep the immune system from attacking healthy tissues in the body. A normal immune system leaves healthy body tissues alone. In people with GCA, the immune system attacks normal body tissues causing damage and inflammation. Actemra interferes with an important step in this attack by blocking the protein interleukin-6, which is made by the immune system and which the body uses to manage infections.</p> <p>The study looked at the following to determine if Actemra is safe and effective for the</p>

Information about the drug	
	<p>treatment of GCA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage with sustained remission¹ at 52 weeks versus placebo (a dummy medication or treatment) - for patients taking a 26-week taper of corticosteroids • Time to first flare • Cumulative prednisone dose over 52 weeks • Change from baseline to 52 weeks in Short Form Health Survey (SF-36), Mental Component Score (MCS) and SF-36 Physical Component Score (PCS) • Change from baseline to 52 weeks in Patient's Global Assessment of disease activity using the Visual Analog Score (VAS) • Bad reactions • Serious bad reactions • Patients leaving the trial due to bad reactions • Bad reactions of special interest - infections or infestations <p>¹ Sustained remission was defined as the absence of a flare following induction of remission within 12 weeks of start of study and maintained from week 12 to week 52.</p>
Other considerations	None

Note:

The Common Drug Review (CDR) is a national organization that reviews drugs on behalf of Canadian public sector plans when manufacturers want to have the jurisdictions provide coverage for the drugs. For detailed information on B.C. PharmaCare's drug review process, including the role of the CDR in that process, see [The Drug Review Process in B.C. - Overview](#).

Cost of the drug under review compared to other drugs used to treat the same indication			
generic name (Brand Name) of Drug Comparator	PharmaCare Status (if and how the drug is already covered)	Usual Dose	Annual Cost of Therapy ¹
tocilizumab (Actemra)	<p>Limited Coverage For Rheumatoid Arthritis, systemic Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis and polyarticular Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis</p> <p>Under Review for Giant Cell Arteritis</p>	Once a week in combination with a tapering course of glucocorticoids. May be used alone after glucocorticoid taper is complete.	\$18,663

¹ All costs are taken from the *CDR Pharmacoeconomic Review Report for tocilizumab (Actemra)* December 21, 2017

Cost of the drug under review compared to other drugs used to treat the same indication			
generic name (Brand Name) of Drug Comparator	PharmaCare Status (if and how the drug is already covered)	Usual Dose	Annual Cost of Therapy ¹
Glucocorticoids			
prednisone (generics)	Regular Benefit	40 to 60 mg per day until erythrocyte (red blood cell) sedimentation rate (ESR), a measure of inflammation in the body, is normal & patient has no symptoms. Then taper by decreasing by 10 mg every 2 weeks to 20 mg, then by 2.5 mg every 2 to 4 weeks to 10 mg, then by 1 mg every 1 to 2 months provided no relapse.	Approximately \$70 to \$100 depending on timing of taper

The Drug Review Process in B.C.

A manufacturer submits a request to the Ministry of Health (Ministry).

An independent group called the [Drug Benefit Council \(DBC\)](#) gives advice to the Ministry. The DBC looks at:

- whether the drug is safe and effective
- advice from a national group called the [Common Drug Review \(CDR\)](#)
- what the drug costs and whether it is a good value for the people of B.C.
- ethical considerations involved with covering or not covering the drug
- input from physicians, patients, caregivers, patient groups and drug submission sponsors

The Ministry makes PharmaCare coverage decisions by taking into account:

- the existing PharmaCare policies, programs and resources
- the evidence-informed advice of the DBC
- the drugs already covered by PharmaCare that are used to treat similar medical conditions
- the overall cost of covering the drug

For more information about the B.C. Drug Review Process, visit: [The Drug Review Process in B.C. - Overview](#).

This document is intended for information only.

It does not take the place of advice from a physician or other qualified health care provider.