



What are the types of arthritis?

There are generally two types of arthritis:

- **Osteoarthritis** is caused by age-related wear and tear on the joints. Osteoarthritis is NOT treated with biologic medications.
- **Rheumatoid arthritis** (“RA”) develops when the immune system is triggered and becomes overactive, leading to pain and inflammation and the eventual destruction of joints. Other “rheumatic diseases” that are similar include psoriatic arthritis, juvenile idiopathic arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis. This summary addresses the most common rheumatic diseases.

What are some of the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis?

Joint pain, tenderness, stiffness, swelling, creaking, grating and the locking of joints. Rheumatoid arthritis often causes cartilage damage and cartilage loss in joints and can interfere with daily tasks.

What is the goal of treatment for rheumatoid arthritis pain?

While there is no cure for arthritis, taking steps to actively manage your arthritis may help you gain control of your pain, keep your joints moving and reduce damage to your joints.

How is rheumatoid arthritis treated?

There are many treatments that are effective:

- Non-medication activities such as regular exercise and physical therapy are important to help keep joints moving. Weight loss is also helpful because it reduces pressure on your joints.
- There are also multiple medication options that can successfully treat rheumatoid arthritis.

What are my medication options?

- Medications to control pain and inflammation, such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications and glucocorticoids.
- Medications used to slow the progression of arthritis such as:
 - Orally administered disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs)
 - Injectable biologic medications

What are my medication options to control pain and inflammation?

During the early stages of rheumatoid arthritis, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen, naproxen, meloxicam and nabumetone and glucocorticoids such as prednisone can reduce pain and inflammation. Glucocorticoids are not generally used long-term.

What oral medications slow the progression of rheumatoid arthritis?

DMARDs such as methotrexate are effective for decreasing symptoms and slowing the progression of joint damage. These medications have been used successfully for many years and can provide the best value.

What are my treatment options if non-medication activities and oral medications do not work?

Biologic medications may be an option when other therapies do not work. Biologic medications:

- are a relatively new kind of medication, given by injection. They can be given by patient themselves like insulin or some require a trip to the doctor for an IV, which delivers the medication directly into a vein;
- are expensive. They cost approximately \$1000 - \$1,500 more than oral DMARDs and NSAIDs for a 30 day supply.

What are my medication options?

Oral DMARDs	Injectable Biologic Medications		
Generics \$11 - \$280*	Preferred Brand \$1,550 – \$1,650*	Non-Preferred Brand \$1,100 - \$2,000*	Given in the Doctor's office \$1,100 - \$6,700*
azathioprine (Imuran [®]) hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil [®]) leflunomide (Arava [®]) methotrexate (Rheumatrex [®]) minocycline (Minocin [®]) auranofin (Ridaura [®]) sulfasalazine (Azulfidine [®] EN-tabs [®]) cyclosporine (Neoral [®] , Sandimmune [®])	Humira [®] Enbrel [®]	Kineret [®] Cimzia [®] Simponi [®]	Remicade [®] Orencia [®] Rituxan [®]
Covered by Rx Benefit (Prescriptions can be filled at a pharmacy)			Covered by Medical Benefit

*Approximate cost estimates based on a 30-day supply. Actual prices may vary depending on your pharmacy and the amount or strength of medication dispensed. Brand names in () are non-formulary and are listed for your reference only.

How effective are biologics?

We can estimate how effective biologics are by comparing how well each medication performed in the scientific studies required by the FDA.

The table below describes how many patients need to receive the medication for one of them to benefit. The medication is more effective if fewer people need to be treated for one to benefit.

Chance of improving joint pain and stiffness by at least 20% after six months of treatment with biologic medications (compared to no treatment).			
Biologic Medications (used with methotrexate)	Rheumatoid Arthritis	Psoriatic Arthritis	Ankylosing Spondylitis
Enbrel	About 1 in 3 likely to benefit	About 1 in 3 likely to benefit	About 1 in 4 likely to benefit
Humira			
Remicade			
Cimzia	About 1 in 3 likely to benefit	Not Studied	Not Studied
Simponi	About 1 in 5 likely to benefit	About 1 in 3 likely to benefit	About 1 in 4 likely to benefit
Orencia	About 1 in 4 likely to benefit	Not Studied	Not Studied
Kineret	About 1 in 7 likely to benefit	Not Studied	Not Studied
Rituxan	Study uncertain	Not Studied	Not Studied

Summary of Biologic Effectiveness

- Enbrel, Humira and Remicade have been shown to improve joint pain and stiffness in rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, juvenile idiopathic arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis.
- Cimzia has been shown to improve joint pain and stiffness in rheumatoid arthritis.
- Simponi has been shown to improve joint pain and stiffness in rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, and ankylosing spondylitis.
- Orencia has been shown to improve joint pain and stiffness in rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile idiopathic arthritis.
- Kineret has been shown to improve joint pain and stiffness in rheumatoid arthritis but is not as powerful as other options.
- Rituxan have been studied in rheumatoid arthritis, but its safety and effectiveness is uncertain at this time.

What are the side effects from biologics?

Biologics appear to have similar common side effects. Additionally all biologics suppress the immune system which can lead to similar serious side effects.

Common side effects

- Injection site reactions such as redness, rash, swelling, itching, or bruising
- IV infusion reactions such as chills and tremors
- Upper respiratory infections (including sinus infections)
- Headaches, rash and nausea

Serious rare side effects

- Serious infections, such as tuberculosis or infections caused by viruses, fungi or bacteria that can spread throughout the body
- Certain types of cancer
- Allergic reactions, including skin rash, swollen face, or trouble breathing
- Recurrence of Hepatitis B virus in patients who carry the virus in their blood
- The body not making enough blood cells to help fight infections or help to stop bleeding
- Heart failure or worsening of heart failure

Why may some biologics require prior authorization?

We want to make sure that biologics are used for diseases they have been proven to effective in.

Biologics are more expensive than other formulary/preferred medications and have significant side effects.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Generic medications have been used for successfully for many years and are the least expensive option. When generics have not been successful Humira, Enbrel and Remicade are effective options and provide the best value. Talk to your doctor about your treatment options.

Note: Since many medication options are available, our physicians and pharmacists developed this to provide you with information about the available alternatives, as well as potential advantages and lack of advantages of the various products. This medication summary was developed based upon an evaluation of information from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), scientific studies, and input from practicing doctors and specialists.



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