



Understanding DMARDs

What are DMARDs?

DMARDs (Disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs) are a group of medicines used in autoimmune types of arthritis. Most people in Australia start these medicines from a specialist doctor such as a Rheumatologist.



DMARDs work by suppressing the body's immune system.

What types of arthritis are DMARDs used for?

DMARDs are used in autoimmune types of arthritis. There are lots of types of autoimmune arthritis.

Including:

- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Axial Spondyloarthritis
- Psoriatic Arthritis
- Scleroderma
- Many more

DMARDs are rarely used in Osteoarthritis.

What is the immune system?

The role of the immune system is to protect your body from illness and outside invaders. Your body reacts with inflammation when it sees these, to help fight off things like germs, viruses and toxins. This is a normal part of how our body works.

What happens to the immune system in arthritis?

In some types of arthritis the immune system is too active. It attacks your body's joints, tissues and organs causing inflammation. This is why some types of autoimmune arthritis are also called inflammatory arthritis.

Why suppress the immune system?

Slowing down immune system activity helps lower the inflammation. This may also lower the pain and possible damage to joints and other parts of your body.

How do DMARD's work?

Slowing down immune system activity helps lower the inflammation. It may also help lower pain and possible damage to joints and other parts of your body. It's important to keep taking the medicine as told by your doctor. It can take different amounts of time (sometimes weeks or months) to know how well the medicine is working. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns.

This resource is intended for general information purposes only.

It is not a substitute for advice provided by your medical or other healthcare professionals.



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What are the risks of these medicines?

If you are concerned about taking these medicines that is normal.

Your doctor will have weighed up the risks against the benefits in helping your condition. They can give you information about the medicines and possible side effects.

Keep talking to doctor if you are unsure or concerned.

Will I need blood tests?

Your doctor may get you to have blood tests while on some DMARDs. These are to check how the medicines are working and to check for side effects.

Check how often you need to have blood tests and how this will happen.

Who should I tell that I'm taking DMARDs?

Tell everyone in your healthcare team.

For example

- Dentists
- Pharmacists
- Opticians
- Physiotherapists
- Dieticians
- Naturopaths



Pharmacists can help answer questions you may have about your medicines.

Other things to consider

Some DMARDs should not be taken when pregnant, breastfeeding or trying to have children.

It is safe for you to be around pregnant and breastfeeding people when taking these medicines.

Store the medicines safely and securely so people, children and animals cannot accidentally handle or take them.

Different DMARDs are used for different types of arthritis. Some people may take a number of DMARDs while others will take one.

Talk to your doctor if you have any questions.



Visit our website for free videos, information and e-learnings about all types of arthritis.

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