

Information for Patients about Medicines containing Filgrastim

April 2025

G-CSF (granulocyte-colony stimulating factor) is a type of protein called a growth factor. It helps the bone marrow to make more blood cells, and increases the number of some types of white blood cells in the body. It can be used with, or after, chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy can reduce the number of white blood cells in your blood. These cells fight infection. If the number of white blood cells is low, you are more likely to get an infection. A low white blood cell count is sometimes called neutropenia.

G-CSF is made naturally in the body, but it can also be made as a drug. Filgrastim is a biological medicine containing G-CSF. They are also long-acting biological medicines containing G-CSF (lipegfilgrastim, pegfilgrastim).

The number of white blood cells usually goes back up naturally between the cycles of chemotherapy. Some people need a biological medicine containing G-CSF (e.g. filgrastim) to help increase their white blood cell count. This can reduce their risk of infection and mean that chemotherapy can be given on time and at the planned dose.

Filgrastim is also used in preparation for a stem cell transplant. It causes blood stem cells to be released from bone marrow into the bloodstream. These stem cells are then collected from the bloodstream.

What are the best-value biological medicines for filgrastim?

The best-value biological medicines identified by the HSE for filgrastim are:

- **Accofil®**
- **Tevagrastim®.**

Accofil® and Tevagrastim® are biosimilar medicines; what is a biosimilar medicine?

A biosimilar medicine is very similar to the original biological medicine. It works in the same way.

Neupogen® was the original biological medicine for filgrastim. When the patent for Neupogen® expired, biosimilar medicines containing filgrastim became available. Accofil® and Tevagrastim® are biosimilar medicines of Neulasta®.

Are biosimilar medicines safe?

Biosimilar medicines are tested to show they are just as safe and effective as the original biological medicine.

What's changing?

At present, no changes are being introduced in relation to the reimbursement of filgrastim on the High Tech Arrangement.

The HSE has identified best-value biological medicines for filgrastim on the High Tech Arrangement, Accofil® and Tevagrastim®.

The HSE recommends that all new patients being initiated on treatment with filgrastim under the High Tech Arrangement should be prescribed one of the recommended BVB medicines.

I am an existing patient prescribed filgrastim, what does this mean for me?

If you are an existing patient, you will continue to receive your medicine from your community pharmacy.

Has my consultant being informed about the best-value biological medicines?

Yes. Consultants who care for patients with cancer are aware of the best-value biological medicines.

Biosimilar medicines are widely used in hospitals for the treatment of cancer.

Why is the HSE recommending best-value biological medicines for filgrastim?

The best-value biological medicines are provided to the HSE at a lower cost. Prescribing the best-value biological medicines will save the HSE money. This means we can give new innovative medicines to even more patients, including for the treatment of cancer.

What supports are available?

Supports for patients prescribed this medicine can include:

- nurse home visit to provide training on administering the injection
- supply of sharps bins and waste collection service
- provision of product information.

Your consultant or a member of their team will register you for these services.

Where can I get more information on biosimilar medicines?

Further information on biosimilar medicines and the best-value biological medicines is available on the following websites:

HSE-Medicines Management Programme: www.hse.ie/mmp under Best-value medicines

Health Products Regulatory Authority: www.hpra.ie/homepage/medicines/special-topics/biosimilar-medicines

European Medicines Agency: www.ema.europa.eu/en/human-regulatory/overview/biosimilar-medicines-overview#information-for-patients-and-healthcare-professionals-section