

Patient information factsheet

Rifampicin and clindamycin for hidradenitis suppurativa in adults

We have given you this factsheet because you have been prescribed rifampicin and clindamycin for the treatment of hidradenitis suppurativa (HS). This factsheet explains what rifampicin and clindamycin are, how to take the medicines and the possible side effects. We hope it will answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

Please read this factsheet alongside the manufacturers' leaflets for rifampicin and clindamycin. The manufacturers' leaflets may not mention that rifampicin and clindamycin can treat HS because it is an unlicensed use of the medicines. For more information about this, please see the 'What is an unlicensed use of a medicine?' section below.

What is hidradenitis suppurativa?

Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) is a painful, long-term skin condition that causes skin abscesses and scarring.

What are rifampicin and clindamycin?

Rifampicin and clindamycin are both antibiotics. Clindamycin works by stopping bacteria from growing, while rifampicin works by killing the bacteria that can cause infections.

Rifampicin and clindamycin can be used in combination with each other or with other antibiotics to treat or prevent a number of different infections in people who are at risk of developing them (for example, people with HS). They are also thought to reduce inflammation. Rifampicin is never recommended to be used alone, so it is important that rifampicin is taken together with clindamycin.

What is an unlicensed use of a medicine?

An unlicensed use of a medicine is when a medicine is used to treat a health condition that it is not officially approved ('licensed') to treat. Rifampicin and clindamycin are licensed in the UK for the treatment of several infections, but not for their use in the treatment of HS (outside the setting of a flare-up triggered by infection).

Your dermatologist (a doctor who specialises in diagnosing and treating diseases of the skin, hair and nails) will explain why they are recommending these specific antibiotics. You can ask them any questions you may have.

Patient information factsheet

How do I take rifampicin and clindamycin?

Before you start treatment, make sure you read the manufacturers' printed information leaflets included with the medicines.

It is important that you:

- take your medicines exactly as directed by your dermatologist (both rifampicin and clindamycin are usually taken twice a day when used in the treatment of HS)
- **do not stop** taking rifampicin or clindamycin without speaking to your dermatologist first or until your course is complete
- take **rifampicin** on an empty stomach (at least 30 minutes to one hour before food, or at least two hours after food)
- try to take the medicines at the same time of day (this will help to avoid missing any doses)

Are these medicines suitable for everyone?

If you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant or are planning on becoming pregnant, please speak to your dermatologist before taking rifampicin or clindamycin.

If you are breastfeeding, small amounts of both rifampicin and clindamycin may pass into the breast milk. Please speak to your dermatologist before breastfeeding.

What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?

If you forget to take a dose of your medicine, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your normal dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose under any circumstances.

Are there any side effects?

Please refer to the manufacturers' information leaflets (included with the medicines) for all the known side effects associated with rifampicin and clindamycin. We have included some of the more common or important side effects below.

Common side effects

Some of the more common side effects experienced by people who take these medicines include:

Rifampicin	Clindamycin
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reddish colour of the urine, sweat, sputum (phlegm) and tears. Soft contact lenses may be permanently stained. Do not be alarmed; this is harmless. This will stop when the rifampicin is stopped. Consider wearing glasses instead of contact lenses.• Headache• Flushing and mild rash	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stomach ache or cramps• Unpleasant taste in the mouth• Skin dryness or irritation

Serious side effects

Stop taking **both** medicines immediately and contact your general practitioner (GP) or NHS 111 if you experience any of the following:

- Diarrhoea, which is severe, prolonged or bloody. This may be a sign of bowel inflammation (pseudomembranous colitis), which can occur following treatment with antibiotics. If this happens, you must stop taking both the clindamycin and rifampicin immediately.
- Yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes (jaundice), feeling or being sick, feeling tired and generally unwell, and/or loss of appetite. These may be signs of liver problems.
- Blistering and peeling of large areas of skin, fever, cough, feeling unwell and swelling of the gums, tongue or lips. These may be signs of a serious skin condition.
- Flu-like symptoms including chills, fever (38°C or above), headaches, dizziness and bone pain, shortness of breath and malaise. This may be 'flu syndrome' which can be caused by rifampicin.
- Bleeding or easy bruising, red spots under the skin, black stools, fever, sore throat, mouth ulcers or recurrent infections. These may be signs of a serious blood condition.

Anaphylaxis

Allergic reactions to medications can happen at any time, even if you have had the medication many times before.

Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening allergic reaction that happens very quickly and must be treated as an emergency.

Call **999** immediately if you experience:

- difficulty breathing or breathing very fast
- wheezing, coughing or noisy breathing
- difficulty speaking or swallowing
- swelling of the eyelids, face or lips
- feeling faint, dizzy or fainting
- feeling agitated or confused
- a rash or itching (especially affecting the whole body)

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to these medicines or you have any concerns about side effects, please speak to your dermatologist, nurse or pharmacist.

Will I need to be monitored?

Your dermatologist will arrange regular follow-up appointments for you throughout your treatment.

Your dermatologist will also arrange regular blood tests (including kidney function, liver function and full blood counts) to check that these medicines are not causing any serious side effects. Your first blood test will be after four to six weeks of treatment and then usually every three months. You can have these blood tests at the hospital or at your GP surgery.

Patient information factsheet

If you have diabetes, you may need to monitor your blood glucose levels more frequently as your diabetes may be harder to control. If this is the case for you, your dermatologist will discuss this with you.

How long will I need to take these medicines?

You will need to take rifampicin and clindamycin for three months. Your dermatologist will then arrange an appointment to review you in clinic.

Can I take rifampicin and clindamycin with other medicines?

Both rifampicin and clindamycin may interact with other medicines. It is important that you tell the dermatologist who is prescribing them for you about any other medicines you are taking (including herbal or over-the-counter medicines). If you are concerned at all, speak to your pharmacist for advice.

Rifampicin reduces the effectiveness of different types of hormonal contraception. If you are currently using hormonal contraception, including the contraceptive pill, please discuss this with your dermatologist. You will need to switch to a different contraceptive method that is not affected by your treatment. You will need to continue with the different contraceptive method throughout your treatment and for four weeks after stopping treatment.

How can I get a repeat prescription?

Your dermatologist will initially provide you with a prescription for a 3-month supply of rifampicin and clindamycin at your clinic appointment.

If you are stable and are not having any problems with your medications, your GP may be able to prescribe them for you – please check at your surgery.

Contact us

If you have any non-urgent questions or concerns about your treatment or any side effects that you may be experiencing, please contact us.

Dermatology nurses

Telephone: **023 8120 2871** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Dermatology secretaries

Email: DermPPC@uhs.nhs.uk (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

If you email our team, please provide your full name, hospital number, date of birth and a brief explanation of the problem.

Alternatively, you can contact our medicines helpline using the details below.

Telephone: **023 8120 6907** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6.30pm)

Email: medicinesadvice@uhs.nhs.uk

Outside of these hours, or if your query is urgent, please contact an out of hours GP or call NHS **111** for advice.

In an emergency, attend your nearest emergency department or call **999**.

Patient information factsheet

Useful links

NHS

Website: www.nhs.uk

Electronic medicines compendium

For the manufacturers' leaflets about rifampicin and clindamycin.

Website: www.medicines.org.uk/emc

Hidradenitis Suppurativa Foundation

Website: www.hs-foundation.org

Adapted with permission from St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. 'Rifampicin and clindamycin for Hidradenitis Suppurativa'. Document reference DER_RCHS_03. Published March 2022

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

Join our family of charity supporters with a monthly donation! It's a wonderful way to show your ongoing support of our patients and staff.

Scan the QR code or visit southamptonhospitalscharity.org/donate



**Southampton
Hospitals
Charity**

Charity Registration Numbers 1051543

