

# MEDICATIONS FOR AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

The job of your **immune system** is to keep you healthy by protecting you from germs and infections. But sometimes the **immune system gets confused** and starts attacking healthy parts of your body by mistake. When this happens, it is called an **"autoimmune disease"**. Examples of autoimmune diseases include rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and spondyloarthritis.

Medications used to treat autoimmune diseases work by **calming down your immune system**.

## 5 TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY

Calming down the immune system is very important, but it can sometimes make it a little harder for your immune system to fight off germs and infections. Here are some tips for staying healthy while taking medications for an autoimmune disease.

- ✓ Wash hands often with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer
- ✓ Consider wearing a mask in crowded places
- ✓ Try to keep your distance from people who are sick
- ✓ Stay up to date with your vaccinations
- ✓ Make sure you get all of the blood tests recommended by your doctor

## WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

You should call your doctor or come in to be seen for any of these reasons:

- If you have a fever (over 100F) for more than 24 hours
- If you have a cough or cold that is not getting better after a week
- If you have difficulty breathing
- If you have chest pain
- If you have a new skin rash
- If you test positive for COVID, flu, RSV, or any other infection

You might be told to stop or pause your medication until you are feeling better.



# STAYING HEALTHY WHILE TAKING IMMUNE SYSTEM MEDICATIONS

The autoimmune disease you have is called:

\_\_\_\_\_

Today, your doctor recommended the following medication(s) for you:

1

\_\_\_\_\_

This medication is given as:

A PILL     AN INJECTION OR SHOT     INTRAVENOUSLY (AS AN IV)

How to take this medication: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2

\_\_\_\_\_

This medication is given as:

A PILL     AN INJECTION OR SHOT     INTRAVENOUSLY (AS AN IV)

How to take this medication: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3

\_\_\_\_\_

This medication is given as:

A PILL     AN INJECTION OR SHOT     INTRAVENOUSLY (AS AN IV)

How to take this medication: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

**? When I take these medications, do I still have an immune system?**

Yes. The immune system has many different ways to keep you healthy. If one part of it is not working well, other parts can take over.

**? Is it safe for me to get vaccines?**

Yes. In fact, it is very important to stay up to date with your vaccines, including the flu shot and COVID shot. However, there are a few that you should NOT get (called "live vaccines"). Ask your doctor if you have any questions about specific vaccines.

**? Do I have to take this medication forever?**

In most cases, you will need to be on life-long treatment for an autoimmune condition. The particular medication might change, depending on how well it's working or whether you are having any side effects from it. Sometimes, people are feeling well enough that they want to stop taking their medication. This is understandable, but usually your symptoms will come back if you don't continue the medication. It is always important to tell your doctor if you've stopped any of your medications.