

Newcastle Bronchiectasis Service

Cardiothoracic Directorate

Nebulised (inhaled) hypertonic saline

Your doctor has prescribed a drug called Hypertonic Saline for you. This is an inhaled drug, which is one that you breathe in. This information sheet tells you about the drug and how it will be given. This will allow you to take this drug safely at home. There are also some instructions showing you how to maintain the equipment necessary and some contact numbers if you need help.

Why do I need this treatment?

Your doctor has recommended Hypertonic Saline for your bronchiectasis. This is a strong salt solution given by a nebuliser. The nebuliser converts the liquid into a mist which you can breathe in. This will take around 10 minutes. Strengths of 6 or 7% are normally used in the nebuliser.

Research studies have shown that regular treatment with hypertonic saline will make your sputum (phlegm) easier to cough up. This means:

- you may have fewer flare ups of your chest
- you may have fewer admissions to hospital
- your symptoms may improve
- your lungs may stay healthier for longer

You will be shown how to administer the hypertonic saline, how to clean the nebuliser and how to operate the compressor. We will give you another leaflet explaining this.

What are the possible side effects?

Some patients cannot take the inhaled drugs as it makes their chest feel tight. We will sometimes give you a 'test' dose of the drug on ward 29 and monitor your lung function. If it is safe to do so, then we can start the drug on a more permanent basis. Salbutamol can also be taken through a nebuliser and some patients feel that this allows them to take the inhaled hypertonic saline more easily. If your chest becomes tight when you are at home, stop the inhaled hypertonic saline for 2 – 3 days. If your symptoms improve then it's likely to be related to the inhaled hypertonic saline. If your symptoms do not improve then they are likely to be caused by something else and you should contact your GP.

How long will I be on treatment?

If you can take the inhaled treatment then we will usually recommend that you stay on it for 3 - 4 months. If it is effective then we would recommend that you remain on this drug long term.

Additional information

The usual dose of inhaled hypertonic saline is 4ml twice a day. Some patients get a marked benefit and don't require a twice daily dose, and can occasionally reduce to once daily or as they require it. However, if you feel that your chest is worsening, or you think an infection is coming on, then go back to using it twice daily.

Where do I get the equipment from?

We will supply you with a compressor unit and nebulisers and other equipment you may need. We will give you a month's supply of the drug and ask your GP if they will continue to prescribe this drug in the community.

If you have any problems with the supply of equipment, please let us know as soon as possible so you don't miss any doses.

Useful telephone numbers

- John Davison Specialist Nurse – Complex Lung Disease Tel: 0191 2139114 (for general advice - Monday to Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm)
- Dr. De Soyza's Secretary 0191 2137468 (for questions about appointments - Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm)
- Lung function department 0191 2137780 (for advice about the nebuliser / compressor - Monday to Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm)
- Ward 29 - 0191 2137029 (for out of hours advice - 24 hours a day)
- Medicines Information Patient helpline on 0191 2823016 - Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm (excluding bank holidays)

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can offer on-the-spot advice and information about the NHS. You can contact them on freephone 0800 032 02 02 or e-mail northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Useful websites

If you would like further information about health conditions and treatment options, you may wish to have a look at the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk. On this website there is an information prescription generator www.nhs.uk/ips which brings together a wealth of approved patient information from the NHS and charity partners which you may find helpful.

This leaflet is available in alternative formats on request by telephoning 0191 2231148.

Information produced by: John Davison (MSc RGN, Specialist Nurse – Complex Lung Disease)

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