PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Certolizumab Pegol

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Cimzia; Cimzia (1 Syringe); Cimzia (2 Syringe); Cimzia-Starter

Brand Names: Canada

Cimzia (2 Pen); Cimzia (2 Syringe)

Warning

- This drug may raise the chance of infection, including severe infections. Sometimes severe infections have led to death. Most people who had these infections were taking other drugs to lower the immune system like methotrexate or steroid drugs. If your child has any infection, is taking antibiotics now or in the recent past, or has had many infections, talk with your child's doctor.
- TB (tuberculosis) has been seen in patients started on this drug. These patients were exposed to TB in the past, but never got the infection. The doctor will test to see if your child has been exposed to TB before starting this drug.
- Lymphoma and other cancers have happened in people who take this drug or drugs like it. This has been deadly in some cases. Talk with the doctor.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat juvenile arthritis.
- If your child has been given this drug for some other reason, talk with the doctor about the benefits and risks. Talk with the doctor if you have questions or concerns

about giving this drug to your child.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child has an infection.
- If your child has recently had a vaccine.
- If your child is taking any of these drugs: Abatacept, adalimumab, anakinra, etanercept, golimumab, infliximab, natalizumab, rituximab, or tocilizumab.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe to give this drug with all of your child's other drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- If your child has a latex allergy, talk with the doctor. Some products have latex.
- Have your child's blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by the doctor.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your child's health care providers and lab workers that your child takes this drug.
- If your child has high blood sugar (diabetes), talk with the doctor. Your child may be more likely to get infections.
- Have your child's skin checked as you have been told by the doctor.
- Your child may have more chance of getting infections. Have your child wash hands often. Avoid crowds and people with infections, colds, or flu.
- If your child has had hepatitis B before or carries the virus, this drug can cause the virus to become active. This can lead to very bad and sometimes deadly liver problems. Your child will be tested for hepatitis B before

starting this drug. You will need to watch for signs of hepatitis while your child takes this drug and for several months after your child stops it. Talk with your child's doctor.

- Talk with the doctor before your child gets any vaccines. Use of some vaccines with this drug may either raise the chance of very bad infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- Be sure your child does not get a weakened bacteria like BCG for bladder cancer while using this drug. Talk with the doctor.
- If your child's weight changes, talk with the doctor. The dose of this drug may need to be changed.

If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:

- Talk with the doctor if your child is pregnant, becomes pregnant, or is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to your child and the baby.
- If your child used this drug while pregnant, tell the baby's doctor.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child's doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Signs of a urinary tract infection (UTI) like blood in the urine, burning or pain when passing urine, feeling the need to pass urine often or right away, fever, lower stomach pain, or pelvic pain.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.

- Signs of lupus like a rash on the cheeks or other body parts, sunburn easy, muscle or joint pain, chest pain or shortness of breath, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- Severe dizziness or passing out.
- Lump in the armpit, groin, or neck.
- Pale skin.
- Call your child's doctor right away if your child has a swollen gland, night sweats, shortness of breath, or weight loss without trying.
- Blood cell problems have happened, like aplastic anemia and a type of low white blood cell count. Tell the doctor right away if your child feels very tired or weak or has a fever, chills, shortness of breath, any unexplained bruising or bleeding, or purple "splotches" on the skin.
- Certain types of skin cancer have happened in people taking this drug. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has a change in color or size of a mole, or any new or changing skin lump or growth.
- Rarely, people using drugs like this one have had nervous system problems. Sometimes, these problems have not gone away. Call the doctor right away if your child has a burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal; change in eyesight; dizziness; seizures; or weakness in the arms or legs.

- Heart failure has happened with this drug, as well as heart failure that has gotten worse in people who already have it. Tell the doctor if your child has heart disease. Call the doctor right away if your child has shortness of breath, a big weight gain, a heartbeat that is not normal, or swelling in the arms or legs that is new or worse.
- A rare type of cancer called hepatosplenic T-cell lymphoma (HSTCL) has happened with this drug and other drugs like it. These cases have been deadly. Almost all cases were in people who were using drugs like this one along with certain other drugs (azathioprine or mercaptopurine). Most of the time, this happened during treatment for Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis. Also, most cases were in male teenagers or young males. Talk with the doctor.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Irritation where the shot is given.
- Signs of a common cold.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All products:

- It is given as a shot into the fatty part of the skin on the top of the thigh or the belly area.
- If you will be giving your child the shot, your child's doctor or nurse will teach you how to give the shot.
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Move the site where you give the shot with each shot.
- Do not give into skin that is irritated, bruised, red, infected, hard, or scarred.
- Do not use if the solution is cloudy, leaking, or has particles.
- This drug is colorless to a faint yellow. Do not use if the solution changes color.

- Inject at least 1 inch (2.5 cm) away from where the last dose was given. If your child's dose has more than 1 injection, give the injections into 2 different places at least 1 inch (2.5 cm) apart.
- Do not give into skin within 2 inches (5 cm) of the belly button.
- Throw away needles in a needle/sharp disposal box. Do not reuse needles or other items. When the box is full, follow all local rules for getting rid of it. Talk with a doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.

Prefilled syringes:

- Before giving the shot, let it come to room temperature. Do not heat this drug.
- Throw syringe away after use. Do not use the same syringe more than one time.

Vials:

- If stored in a refrigerator, let this drug come to room temperature before using it. Leave it at room temperature for at least 30 minutes. Do not heat this drug.
- This drug must be mixed with sterile water before using. The sterile water that comes with this drug is meant for one use only. Throw away any part of the sterile water

that is not used after one use.

- When making, do not shake vial.
- Use right away after mixing or you may store in a refrigerator for up to 24 hours.
- When ready to inject the mixed drug, it should be at room temperature. Do not leave any mixed drug at room temperature for more than 2 hours before using.
- Throw away any part of the opened vial not used after the shot is given.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- Call your child's doctor to find out what to do.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?
All products:

- Store in a refrigerator. Do not freeze.
- Store in the original container to protect from light.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

Prefilled syringes:

- If needed, you may store at room temperature for up to 7 days. Write down the date you take this drug out of the refrigerator. If stored at room temperature and not used within 7 days, throw this drug away.
- Do not put this drug back in the refrigerator after it has been stored at room temperature.

Vials:

- If needed, you may store at room temperature for up to 6 months. Write down the date you take this drug out of the refrigerator. If stored at room temperature and not used within 6 months, throw this drug away.
- Do not put this drug back in the refrigerator after it has been stored at room temperature.

General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.

- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the

Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2025-10-01

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Certolizumab Pegol - Last updated on October 11, 2024
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center