

Treatments for MS:

Rebif® (interferon beta-1a (rch))

There is a range of disease modifying therapies approved for people with MS in Australia. These therapies, also called immunotherapies, work to reduce disease activity in the central nervous system and reduce the frequency and severity of relapses in people with MS.

What is Rebif® and how does it work?

The active ingredient of Rebif® is interferon beta-1a (rch). Interferons are proteins produced naturally in the human body to help fight infections and regulate the immune system. Beta interferons have been shown to slow down activity and disease progression in MS. They do this by helping regulate the immune system, reducing attacks on myelin. In clinical trials¹ Rebif® (interferon beta -1a (rch)) significantly decreased the frequency of MS relapses and slowed down the accrual of disability.

How is Rebif® administered?

Rebif® is taken three times a week (e.g. Monday, Wednesday and Friday) by subcutaneous (under the skin) injection. You receive a month's supply which consists of twelve injections.

You can choose from four different delivery devices for Rebif®:

1. RebiSmart® - an electronic auto-injection device with multi-dose cartridge
2. RebiSlide® - a manual auto-injector with multi-dose cartridge
3. RebiDose® - a pre-filled, single use disposable auto-injection device
4. RebiJect® - a pre-filled syringe with auto injection device

For assistance and training on how to use the delivery devices please contact Merck Medical Information on 1800 073 243 Monday to Friday between the hours of 9.00am to 5.00pm or speak with your MS Nurse.

What are the potential side effects of Rebif® treatment?

Rebif® helps most people with MS, but it may have side effects in some people.

Tell your doctor if you notice any of the following and they worry you: injection site reactions including redness, swelling, bruising, pain; flu-like symptoms including fever, chills, and muscular pain, headache or fatigue, itching or rash, abdominal pain, diarrhea or nausea, muscle pain or aches, back pain or painful joints, muscle stiffness or spasms, weakness, difficulty walking and increased sweating.

Other side effects may also occur in some patients – tell your doctor if you notice anything else that is making you feel unwell.

How much does Rebif® cost?

Rebif® has been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and is available through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Please discuss with your neurologist whether Rebif® is the right treatment for you. Your neurologist will need to obtain an authority to prescribe the medication for you. There are a number of criteria you must meet before your doctor gains authority to write this prescription.

For details of the criteria required to receive a prescription for Rebif® treatment through the PBS, please visit the official PBS website at:

<http://www.pbs.gov.au/medicine/item/8403G>

You will need to click on the red **Authority Required (STREAMLINED)** link.

If you are eligible for medications through the PBS, you will need to pay a contribution fee each time your prescription is dispensed. The Federal Government pays for the remaining cost. The amount of the contribution fee depends upon whether or not you have a pension or concession card. The amount of this fee is set each year by the Federal Government.

Further information about the PBS, your entitlements and details regarding the PBS safety net (which protects patients and their families requiring a large number of PBS items) is available through the Medicare Australia website at: www.medicare.gov.au

If you are not eligible for Rebif® through the PBS, for example if you are a visitor from overseas, your neurologist may write a private prescription. In this instance you will have to pay the full cost to the pharmacy that dispenses your medication. You will need to request a quote from your pharmacist for the price of any medication which is not subsidised by the PBS.

General information

Most pharmacies do not keep Rebif® in stock. They will place an order with the manufacturer to have stock delivered to the pharmacy especially for you. It is therefore important to let your pharmacist know a few days before you need the medication.

Rebif® should be stored at 2-8°C in the original packing to protect it from light. Should refrigeration be temporarily unavailable, Rebif can be stored at 25°C for up to 14 days, then put back in the refrigerator and used before the expiry date.

In Australia, Rebif® is manufactured by:

Merck Serono Australia Pty Ltd
Unit 3-4, 25 Frenchs Forest Road
Frenchs Forest, NSW 2086

Merck has a toll free Medical Information and Customer Service line: 1800 073 243 Monday to Friday between the hours of 9.00am to 5.00pm.

For more information on MS and other MS treatments

- Speak to your neurologist about what treatment best suits your individual circumstances.
 - MS Nurses can also provide information, training and ongoing support in managing your immunotherapy.
 - For information about MS, MS treatment and to find contact details for your state MS organization visit **www.msaustralia.org.au**
 - MS Research Australia provides information on the latest research and clinical trials at www.msra.org.au
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References

1. Rebif® Approved Product Information, February 2016.
<https://www.ebs.tga.gov.au/ebs/picmi/picmirepository.nsf/pdf?OpenAgent&id=CP-2010-PI-07443-3>
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Note:

MS Australia does not recommend any specific disease-modifying treatment for people living with MS. Decisions about any treatments, taking into consideration the potential benefits and side effects for each individual's circumstances, should be made in careful consultation with the person's neurologist.

The information supplied in this document is collated from material provided by the relevant pharmaceutical company, MIMS (<http://www.mims.com.au>) and MS Research Australia.