

The Johns Hopkins Arthritis Center
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What is Etanercept (Enbrel®)?

Etanercept is injected under the skin to reduce signs and symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, such as joint swelling, pain, fatigue, and length of morning stiffness. Etanercept is commonly known as **Enbrel®**.

How do I take it?

Etanercept is injected under the skin (similar to insulin injections) once a week. The injections are 50 mg each and are available in either a prefilled syringe or an automatic “pen” injector. You will be instructed on how to give yourself injections. This medication must be refrigerated. Do not freeze this medicine.

What about side effects?

The most common side effect is serious infection. Etanercept can lower the body’s ability to fight infection. ***Be sure to contact your physician if you have any type of infection or if you are planning a surgery.*** You may have to stop etanercept while being treated for an infection.

You will need to have a negative tuberculosis (TB) skin test before beginning etanercept therapy.

You should not take a live vaccine (Flu-Mist, chicken pox vaccine, shingles vaccine) while on abatacept. The flu-shot is not a live virus and all patients should consider having this vaccination yearly.

Occasionally some patients develop a reaction at the injection site such as, redness, pain or swelling. Notify your doctor to find out the best way to handle any reactions.

What about other medications?

When you are taking Etanercept, it is very important that your doctors know if you are taking any other medicine. This includes prescription and non-prescription medicines as well as birth control pills, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Etanercept can be taken with other medications – NSAIDS (Celebrex®, ibuprofen, naproxen), prednisone, methotrexate, and plaquenil.

What else should I know?

You must continue your regular visits to the rheumatologist. Your doctor will monitor you for any improvements in your rheumatoid arthritis and for any signs of infections. Most patients notice an improvement in symptoms after the first or second injection.

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