

Penicillamine

Information sheet for GPs

Penicillamine is of proven benefit as a disease modifying agent in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. Clinical improvement is normally seen between 3 and 6 months after starting treatment. NSAID and simple analgesics should be continued but the doses can be reduced once penicillamine therapy is established.

Dose Regimen

- 125 mg per day increasing by 125 mg every 4 weeks to 500 mg per day.
- If no response after a further 3 months increase by 125 mg every 4 weeks to 750 mg per day.
- If no response after a further 3 months a further increase by 125 mg every 4 weeks to 1 gram per day may be considered.
- If no response after 3 months on the maximum dose stop treatment.

Monitoring

- Baseline FBC, urinalysis, U&E and creatinine
- FBC fortnightly and urinalysis weekly until on stable dose (8 wks) and monthly thereafter.
- FBC and urinalysis in the week after any increase in dose.
- Ask patient about rash or oral ulceration at each visit
- Enter results in patient held record when shared care in place.

Side Effects

- alteration of taste
- nausea/dyspepsia
- abnormal bruising/sore throat
- rash/oral ulceration
- WBC $<4.0 \times 10^9/l$
- neutrophils $< 2.0 \times 10^9/l$
- platelets $<150 \times 10^9/l$
- proteinuria 1+ or more
- haematuria 1+ or more

Action

continue treatment (usually settles spontaneously)

1. Prescribe prochlorperazine
 2. Reduce dose if severe
- withhold until FBC available
withhold and d/w rheumatologist
withhold and d/w rheumatologist
withhold and d/w rheumatologist
withhold and d/w rheumatologist
withhold and d/w rheumatologist
withhold and d/w rheumatologist

Ask about side effects at every consultation

Please note that in addition to absolute values for haematological indices a rapid fall or consistent downward trend in any values should prompt caution and extra vigilance

Absolute Contra-indications

- Pregnancy and Breast Feeding

References

SPC (Distamine, Dista Products Ltd), June 1999
BSR Guidelines, July 2000
BNF 41, March 2001

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Please consult the manufacturers Data Sheet of Summary of Product Characteristics for further information.