
Influenza and Oseltamivir (TAMIFLU™)

This handout provides information about the influenza virus and oseltamivir (TAMIFLU™). Oseltamivir is a medication used to treat or prevent the flu. When an outbreak occurs in a hospital, we generally recommend all patients who are hospitalized on an outbreak area to take oseltamivir as prevention.

Please discuss with your health care provider if taking oseltamivir will be of benefit to you.

What is the “Flu”?

The flu is an infection caused by the influenza virus. Symptoms include:

- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- extreme tiredness
- runny or stuffy nose
- headaches
- muscle aches

Many people use the term “flu” to mean any combination of these symptoms, and it is often confused with having a cold. The flu is often worse. The symptoms can happen all of a sudden and may last longer than a cold.

Flu typically happens about once a year, usually in the winter, when the influenza virus spreads widely in the community. About 10 to 20% of the population get the flu each year. This means that out of 100 people 10 to 20 of them would get the flu.

The influenza virus not only causes the flu but also can lead to other medical complications. Doctors call this ‘complicated influenza disease’ which can cause serious illness and death. **Certain persons are at higher risk of complicated influenza disease.** They include:

- children less than 2 years old
- older persons greater than 65 years
- persons with other medical conditions such as heart or lung diseases, and obesity

What is oseltamivir?

Oseltamivir is a medication that attacks the influenza virus and stops it from spreading inside your body. Generally, it is used for treating adults and children with the flu whose symptoms started within the last 48 hours.

It can also be used to reduce the chance of getting the flu and its complications in adults and children who were exposed to someone who has the flu.

Oseltamivir is used to reduce the chance of getting the flu if there is a flu outbreak.

Should I get a flu shot?

Yes. Oseltamivir does not take the place of getting a flu shot (vaccination). You should continue to get a flu shot every year, according to your health care provider's advice.

Who should not take oseltamivir?

Do not take oseltamivir if you are allergic to the main ingredient, oseltamivir phosphate or to any other ingredients of oseltamivir.

Before starting treatment, make sure your health care provider knows if you take any other medicines, or are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.

Tell your health care provider if you have any type of kidney disease, heart disease, respiratory disease or any serious health condition.

How should I take oseltamivir?

It is important that you begin taking oseltamivir as soon as possible from the start of your flu symptoms or soon after you are exposed to the flu.

If you feel worse or develop new symptoms during treatment with oseltamivir, or if your flu symptoms do not start to get better, you should contact your health care provider.

To prevent the flu: Take oseltamivir once a day for as long as prescribed. Follow your health care provider's advice on how long to take oseltamivir.

What if I miss a dose?

If you forget to take your medicine, take the missed dose as soon as you remember except if it is 2 hours or less before your next dose. Then continue to take oseltamivir at the usual times.

Do not take 2 doses at a time to make up for a missed dose. If you miss several doses, talk with your health care provider for advice.

What are some possible side effects of oseltamivir?

Although rare, the most common side effect of oseltamivir is an upset stomach - nausea and vomiting. An upset stomach is usually mild to moderate and happens in the first 2 days of treatment. Taking oseltamivir with food may reduce the chance of getting these side effects.

Other side effects include:

- fatigue (very tired)
- dizziness and vertigo (trouble with balance)
- respiratory infections cough and runny nose
- headaches
- insomnia (can't sleep)

If you notice any side effects not mentioned above, or if you have any concerns about the side effects you get, please talk with your health care provider.

How and where should I store oseltamivir?

Oseltamivir capsules should be stored at room temperature below 25°C (77 F) and kept in a dry place. Keep this medication out of reach of children.

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.
Clean your hands.**

