

Aminoglycoside antibiotics

e.g. gentamicin, amikacin and tobramycin

What are aminoglycoside antibiotics used for?

Aminoglycosides are a group of antibiotics used to treat serious, sometimes life-threatening infections. Your doctor may choose to use an aminoglycoside as it will be the most effective antibiotic to treat the type of bacteria causing your infection. Sometimes it may be the only antibiotic available to treat your infection if you have allergies to antibiotics or your infection is caused by bacteria which are resistant to other types of antibiotics.

How are aminoglycosides given?

Aminoglycosides are given into a vein as an injection or drip. For this reason aminoglycosides will usually be given to you by a nurse in hospital. Occasionally it may be possible for a specially trained nurse to come to your home to give you your injection but this depends on how unwell you are.

The dose of aminoglycoside you will be given will depend on your age, your weight and how well your kidneys are working. Blood tests will be taken to measure the amount of aminoglycosides and sometimes the dose may change if you have too much or too little in your blood stream.

What are the side-effects of aminoglycosides?

Like all medicines, aminoglycosides can occasionally have side-effects. The chance of these side-effects increases the longer you are receiving these antibiotics. The known side effects include damage to your kidneys or damage to your ears. Damage to your ears may present as hearing loss, dizziness and loss of balance or a ringing in your ears which is known as 'tinnitus'.

It is difficult to estimate the risk of these effects in an individual as it depends on a number of factors. What is known is that the risk increases if your kidneys did not work well before you receive an aminoglycoside or if you are over 65 years of age.

What can be done to reduce the chance of side-effects?

Blood tests will be done to measure the amount of aminoglycosides in your blood and also to measure how well your kidneys are working.

If you are taking water tablets 'diuretics' e.g. Furosemide, your doctor may ask you to stop taking these whilst you are on the aminoglycoside antibiotics. This is because they can increase the risk of aminoglycosides causing damage to your ears.

Is there anything that I can do?

It is extremely important to tell your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you notice any changes to your hearing such as hearing loss or ringing in your ears. Please also tell us if you feel dizzy or have in difficulty keeping your balance. If you experience any of these symptoms then please do not drive.

It is also important to tell us if you are taking any herbal or homeopathic medicines or using any 'home remedies' that can be bought from a pharmacy or supermarket without a prescription. This is because they can sometimes make it more likely that you will suffer a side-effect from aminoglycosides.

Please tell us if you are suffering from a condition called myasthenia gravis or are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Who can I speak to if I have any questions?

The doctors caring for you will be happy to answer any questions you may have. You can also ask to speak to your ward pharmacist.

A patient information leaflet written by the manufacturer is also available on the following website:- <http://xpil.medicines.org.uk/>

A free telephone line for people with difficulty with their sight run by the Royal National Institute for Blind People is available. They provide medicine information leaflets in large print, braille and as an audio CD. **0800 198 5000**

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Se precisa deste documento noutra língua por favor informe o seu interprete ou um membro do pessoal.

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