

Prophylactic nebulised pentamidine

Haematology

What is pentamidine?

Pentamidine is used to prevent and treatment a type of pneumonia called **pneumocystis jirovecii**. Patients with an immune system which doesn't work very well (**a suppressed immune system**) are more likely to get this infection. Nebulised (steam inhaled) pentamidine is used:

- when you have experienced side effects to other drugs like Cotrimoxazole and can no longer use medicines like this, or
- if your blood counts are low and steam inhalation is the easiest way to give you this medicine.

What happens when I arrive for the treatment?

You will have the treatment in hospital, in a special room at the haematology unit. When you arrive, we will take down some of your details.

What happens during the treatment?

You will be given a drug called ventolin, which relaxes your airways. You will be given this drug by inhalation, which means you will breathe it in through a device called a nebuliser.

You will be given the pentamidine in the same way as the ventolin. The nebuliser changes the drug into a mist that coats your lungs. The room that you receive your treatment in has a mechanical filtration system that removes all the medicine that you breathe back out into the air. This filtration machine will be running while you take your pentamidine and does make some noise.

To prevent staff from being affected by the pentamidine treatment, they will not be able to stay in the same room as you. However, the nurse will be able to see you at all times. If you need help, you will have a call bell.

The treatment takes 20 to 30 minutes and is usually given once every 4 weeks.

What are the side-effects to this treatment?

Everybody reacts differently to drugs, but below is a list of the more common side effects you may experience:

- Chest pain, coughing or wheezing: you will be given another inhaled medicine before the pentamidine to reduce this
- A decrease in appetite: this should not usually last very long
- A bitter or metallic taste in the mouth: this can be reduced by sucking on a boiled sweet afterwards
- A sore throat that may last for a few hours
- A rash
- Light headedness, nausea (feeling sick) and fatigue.

This is not a complete list, and there may be other side effects.

Contact information

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