Humira (adalimumab)

What Is It?
Humira (also known by its generic name adalimumab) is a biologic medication that was first approved for rheumatoid arthritis in 2002 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It was approved for psoriatic arthritis in 2005 and for psoriasis in 2008. It is also approved for treating juvenile idiopathic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis (arthritis affecting the spine) and Crohn’s disease. Humira is available by prescription.

How Does It Work?
Humira blocks tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-alpha), a chemical "messenger" in the immune system that signals other cells to cause inflammation. In people with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis there is too much TNF-alpha in the skin and joints. Humira helps lower the amount of TNF-alpha, which interrupts the inflammatory cycle of psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. This leads to improvement for many people who take it.

Who Can Take It?
Humira is prescribed for adults with moderate to severe psoriasis. It can help to reduce the appearance of lesions on the skin. It is also prescribed for people with active psoriatic arthritis where it may prevent further joint damage.

Who Should Not Take It?
- People with active serious infections or a history of recurrent infections
- People with a history of heart failure
- People with multiple sclerosis or other types of demyelinating neurologic diseases

Caution is advised for people who experience any numbness or tingling; have ever had a disease that affects the nervous system; and in the elderly, due to the already increased risk of infection for this age group. The impact of Humira on pregnant women or developing fetuses is not known, nor is it known if the medication passes into breast milk in nursing women. If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, talk with your doctor.

How Is It Used?
Humira is given at home by an injection under the skin. The recommended dose for psoriasis is 80 milligrams (mg) on day 1, and then 40 mg every other week beginning on day 8. The recommended dose for psoriatic arthritis is 40 mg every other week. Humira is designed to be taken continuously to maintain improvement.

Can It Be Used With Other Treatments?
Humira is prescribed by itself or in combination with methotrexate, a systemic medication prescribed for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. It is also safe to take it with phototherapy, topical treatments or pain relievers, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS). Talk to your doctor about any other medications, vitamins or supplements you may be taking.

SIDE EFFECTS
The most common side effects are:
- upper respiratory infections
- headache
- rash
- nausea
- injection site reactions
- urinary tract infection

These side effects were generally mild and did not cause most people to stop taking Humira. Side effects happened most often after the first dose and may decrease after additional doses.
Effectiveness
Psoriasis Severity Score:

- Usually determined by examining the degree of redness, shedding, plaque thickness and affected body surface area. Some scores take into consideration itching and the disease’s effect on quality of life.

- In clinical trials, about 70 percent of the individuals taking the recommended dose saw a 75 percent improvement in the severity of their psoriasis after three months.

Arthritis Severity Score:

- Usually determined by examining swelling in and around the joints and taking into consideration joint tenderness, pain, physical function and morning stiffness.

- In clinical trials, about 36 percent of people taking Humira experienced a 50 percent improvement in the severity of their psoriatic arthritis after 3 months.

Risks

- Humira is not recommended for someone with an active infection or a history or recurring infections. Tell your doctor if you have a fever, cough, flu-like symptoms, feel very tired, or have warm, red or painful skin.

- Prior to starting treatment with Humira, your doctor should test you for tuberculosis (TB) infections using either a TB skin test or chest X-ray. If a positive TB test occurs, you may be treated with medicine for TB before you begin taking Humira.

- There have been cases of certain skin cancers in people taking Humira. These are generally not life threatening if treated. Tell your doctor if you have a bump or an open sore that doesn’t heal.

- There is the risk of an allergic reaction to Humira. Signs of a serious allergic reaction include a skin rash, a swollen face, or trouble breathing.

- Some people taking a TNF-alpha blocker such as Humira have reported reactivation of hepatitis B virus. Some of these cases have been fatal. Tell your doctor if you know or think you may be a carrier of hepatitis B. Tell your doctor if you experience signs of hepatitis B infection, such as feeling unwell, poor appetite and tiredness.

- In some people taking Humira, the body may not make enough of the blood cells that help stop bleeding. Tell your doctor if you have a persistent fever, look very pale, bruise or bleed very easily.

- There have been reports of new or worsening heart failure in people taking Humira. Tell your doctor if you have shortness of breath, sudden weight gain or swelling of your ankles or feet.

- Some individuals have developed lupus-like symptoms that decreased after their treatment was stopped. Tell your doctor if you develop chest pains that do not go away, shortness of breath, joint pain, or a rash on your cheeks or arms that is sensitive to the sun.

For detailed information on side effects and safety, talk with your doctor.

Patient Assistance Information

myHUMIRA, a patient assistance program through AbbVie, provides medication savings and additional support for people taking Humira. For more information, call 800-448-6472 or visit www.humira.com.

For More Information

To learn more about the treatment of psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis visit www.psoriasis.org.