



Australian
Rheumatology
Association

PATIENT INFORMATION ON

PROBENECID

(Brand name: Pro-Cid)

This information sheet has been produced by the Australian Rheumatology Association to help you understand the medicine that has been prescribed for you. It includes important information about:

- **How you should take your medicine;**
- **What are the possible side effects;**
- **What tests you may have to have to monitor your condition and to detect unwanted effects; and**
- **Other precautions you should take.**

Please read it carefully and discuss with your doctor.

What is probenecid?

Probenecid is a medicine used to treat gout, which is a type of arthritis caused by a build up of uric acid crystals in the joints. Uric acid is produced normally by cells, but in gout the body does not flush it out fast enough.

Probenecid works by making the kidneys flush the excess uric acid from the body. This helps prevent uric acid crystals building up in the joints and therefore helps prevent joints becoming swollen and painful.

Probenecid does not treat the pain or inflammation of an 'attack' of gout, but it is taken on a long term basis to prevent further attacks. The treatment also helps to reduce the risk of your joints being permanently damaged.

Probenecid can also help increase the level of certain antibiotics in the blood. This helps increase the effectiveness of the antibiotics to treat an infection.

For more information about GOUT see the Arthritis Australia website
<http://arthritisaustralia.com.au/fact+sheets>

What benefit can you expect from your treatment?

Following a diagnosis of gout, probenecid may be given on a long term basis to **prevent** further attacks. It is not used to treat a sudden attack and it is not normally started during a sudden attack.

It does not work straight away. Other medicines may be given to improve your symptoms while waiting for this medicine to work.

There are three important things to keep in mind when you start taking probenecid:

- it may take several weeks to reduce the level of uric acid, so you may continue to have gout attacks for some time;
- you need to drink lots of water each day when you start this medicine, and while the dose is being adjusted;
- sometimes starting probenecid can actually cause an attack of gout

This does not mean the medicine is not working, so keep taking it during such attacks together with any other medicine your doctor may recommend to manage the pain. Medicines such as colchicine or anti-inflammatory drugs may be recommended before or at the same time probenecid is started to reduce the risk of a gout attack. Your doctor will advise you about how these medicines should be taken.

Because probenecid works on the kidneys, it may not be effective if kidney function is abnormal.

How is probenecid taken?

Probenecid is taken by mouth as a tablet. It is usually taken twice a day. It should be taken after food to reduce stomach upset. **It should also be taken with plenty of water.** The tablets should be swallowed whole.

For greatest benefit, probenecid should be taken regularly. To help you remember, take it at the same time(s) each day. If you forget to take a dose, there is no need to double the dose at the next scheduled time.

What is the dosage?

Tablets come in 500mg strength. Treatment usually starts with a small dose such as ½ a tablet twice a day. It may be increased to 1 or sometimes 2 tablets twice a day, with a maximum of 4 tablets a day.

Are other medicines taken with probenecid?

Probenecid may be taken in combination with other arthritis medicines, including:

- steroid medicines such as prednisolone or cortisone injections into the joint;
- anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs) such as naproxen (Naprosyn) or ibuprofen (Brufen/Nurofen); and/or
- simple pain killers such as paracetamol.

How long is the treatment continued?

The treatment may be short term or continued indefinitely as long as it is effective and as long as no serious side effects occur.

If probenecid treatment is stopped suddenly, there is a risk that your gout will get worse again. Continue with your treatment unless advised by your doctor or unless side effects develop.

Are there any possible side effects?

Most people do not experience side effects from probenecid. Below are possible side effects that you might experience with your treatment. Tell your doctor if you experience any side effects.

If you do experience side effects, a reduction in dose may minimise these so that you can continue to take the medicine. Your doctor will advise on any dose changes that are necessary.

Most common possible side effects:

- The most common side effects are *nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite*. These can be reduced if you eat little and often. Stick to simple foods such as dry toast. If you are sick, drink plenty of liquid.

Less common or rare possible side effects:

There are some rare but potentially serious possible side effects with probenecid. These include:

- *Headache, flushing, sore gums, difficulty sleeping and dizziness.*
- ***Skin problems:*** Probenecid can cause a rash or flaking skin, as well as boils or sore lips or mouth ulcers. **If any of these occur contact your doctor straight away.**
- ***Kidney stones:*** Probenecid can cause kidney stones. If you get blood in the urine or severe back pain, see your doctor.

The dose of probenecid may need to be reduced or it may need to be stopped if problems occur.

Long term possible side effects:

Probenecid can be taken for long periods to manage gout. There seem to be no additional long term side effects.

Probenecid does not affect a person's ability to have children in the long term. See also *Precautions*.

What precautions are necessary?

Blood tests:

- You may need to have blood tests during the first few months of treatment depending on what other medicines you are taking and on your other health concerns. The uric acid level in your blood will also be checked to make sure the medicine is working.
- It is important to see your general practitioner regularly as they have an important role in monitoring your condition

Other medicines:

- Probenecid can interact with other medicines. You should tell your doctor (including your GP, rheumatologist and others) about all medicines you are taking or plan to take. This includes over-the-counter or herbal/naturopathic medicines. You should also mention your treatment when you see other health professionals.
- Probenecid may affect how the kidneys get rid of some other medicines, including: acyclovir and ganciclovir (used to treat viral infections); sulfonylureas (used to treat diabetes); zidovudine (AZT, used to treat HIV); and antibiotics including

cephalosporins, penicillins and sulphonamides.

Dosage adjustment of these medicines may be required when taken with probenecid.

- Probenecid also affects how methotrexate is removed by the kidneys, and can therefore increase methotrexate toxicity (particularly if the dose of methotrexate is more than 20 mg/week). Extra care is needed in elderly people and/or if kidney function is significantly reduced.
- Aspirin can be used safely in the low doses taken for prevention of heart attack and stroke. If you have gout, you should avoid taking aspirin in other situations.
- Probenecid can be taken safely with anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), as long as your kidney function is reasonably normal.
- The simple pain reliever, paracetamol, and combined medicines such as Panadeine and Panadeine Forte, can be used while taking probenecid provided you take them as directed.

Alcohol:

- Alcohol can trigger an attack of gout. When taking probenecid, keep your alcohol intake to a minimum i.e. 1-2 standard drinks, once or twice a week. Drinking a lot (more than 6-8 standard drinks) on one occasion, even if infrequently, is strongly discouraged. In some cases total abstinence from alcohol is recommended. Check with your doctor about your situation.
- In addition to alcohol, other things that may trigger an acute gout attack include dehydration, diuretics (fluid tablets) and stopping probenecid treatment.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding:

- Probenecid is not often used by women who may wish to get pregnant. The effects of probenecid during pregnancy have not been well studied, so it is not clear if probenecid causes birth defects.
- If you are pregnant or are considering having a child, you should discuss this with your doctor before beginning this medicine.

All patients taking probenecid should be seen regularly by a doctor to optimise treatment and to minimise any potential side effects

If you have any questions or concerns write them down and discuss them with your doctor.

Your doctor's contact details:

REMEMBER – Keep all medicines out of reach of children

The information in this sheet has been obtained from various sources and has been reviewed by the Australian Rheumatology Association. It is intended as an educational aid and does not cover all possible uses, actions, precautions, side effects, or interactions of the medicines mentioned. This information is not intended as medical advice for individual problems nor for making an individual assessment of the risks and benefits of taking a particular medicine. It can be reproduced in its entirety but cannot be altered without permission from the ARA.

The NHMRC publication: *How to present the evidence for consumers: preparation of consumer publications* (2000) was used as a guide in developing this publication.

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