



# Intravenous antibiotic therapy using meropenem

information for patients

## INTRODUCTION

You are returning home after being admitted to a nursing unit, but you still need intravenous antibiotics at home to treat a bacterial infection.

You will be treated using meropenem. During your stay at the hospital, your doctor, the nurse or the hospital pharmacist has already given you verbal information about your antibiotic treatment. This brochure provides a practical overview of your antibiotic treatment using meropenem. It contains specific information about your therapy, about the administration of the medicine and the possible side effects, as well as some advice, including on when to contact your doctor (or GP) or (home) nurse.

The continuation of your intravenous antibiotic therapy in a home setting falls under the OPAT care programme. **OPAT is an abbreviation of 'Outpatient Parenteral Antimicrobial Therapy'**. In other words, this relates to the parenteral administration of antimicrobial medicine without the patient needing to be admitted to hospital. 'Parenteral' means that the administration of the medicine does not happen through the gastrointestinal system (by swallowing a tablet, for example), but elsewhere in the body, such as through injection or an intravenous drip.

If you have any remaining questions after reading this brochure, please do not hesitate to let us know. The doctor, hospital pharmacist or nurses will be happy to provide more detail.

## WHAT IS MEROPENEM?

Meropenem is an antibiotic used to treat bacterial infections. It disturbs the formation of the cell wall in bacteria, making it **bactericidal**.

## WHAT DOSAGE WILL YOU RECEIVE?

If your kidneys function normally, you will be given a dose of **3 grams or 6 grams of meropenem per 24 hours split across three administrations**, depending on the type of infection.

In patients with reduced kidney function, the dosage will be adjusted depending on their kidney function.

## HOW IS MEROPENEM ADMINISTERED?

Meropenem is administered **three times daily (every 8 hours)** as a **slow intravenous injection**: 1 g over 3 to 5 minutes and 2 g over 6 to 10 minutes.

The duration of therapy depends on the type of infection and how long you received antibiotic therapy in hospital.



## WHERE WILL THIS THERAPY BE ADMINISTERED?

Your therapy will start during your stay at the hospital, and will be continued at home under the OPAT care programme.

Your home nurse will administer your intravenous antibiotic injections three times a day via the catheter.

More detailed information on the preparation of the antibiotic will be delivered to your home care nurse.

The antibiotic and the equipment required to prepare and administer the antibiotic will be made available by the hospital pharmacy when you are discharged from the hospital.

In the case of long-term home treatment with antibiotic therapy, it is possible that not all the material for the entire duration of treatment can be given at once. You may then need to collect one or more additional packs of material from the hospital pharmacy at UZ Leuven during the course of your home treatment. This will be clearly communicated to you by the OPAT team. You will find the hospital pharmacy ('ziekenhuisapotheek') on the Gasthuisberg campus, via 'Gele Straat, poort 1, niveau 2' (GE 1.2).

## HOW WILL THE THERAPY BE MONITORED?

Your treating doctor will decide if and when you will come back to the consultation for therapy monitoring, blood sampling and/or clinical examination.

We check your blood for the following:

- **The level of inflammation** in your blood: to check how the therapy is going, we need to check the level of inflammation in your blood.
- **Your kidney function**: as meropenem is mainly excreted through your kidneys, we need to monitor your kidney function.
- Meropenem treatment can have an impact on:
  - **the number of blood cells and platelets in your blood**
  - **your liver function**

It is unlikely that you will notice any of these effects, but your doctor can monitor them by taking blood samples.

## HOW TO STORE MEROPENEM

Unopened vials of meropenem must be stored in the original packaging, at room temperature (15-25 °C) and in a dry and dark place, out of the reach of children.

**Meropenem solutions must always be prepared immediately before administration.**

## POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

Some people experience severe side effects, while others experience none at all. The occurrence of side effects has no bearing whatsoever on the effectiveness of your treatment. Please do not hesitate to contact your doctor (or GP) or (home) nurse if you have any questions or are not sure about anything.

The following side effects may occur:

- ✓ Gastrointestinal symptoms: diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting and digestive problems
- ✓ Headache, tingling and/or muscle contractions
- ✓ Vein inflammation (red, painful, swollen skin around your veins) as a result of the intravenous administration
- ✓ (Itchy) skin rash

## OTHER MEDICATION

- Please tell the doctor and pharmacist at the hospital which **other medicines**, vitamins, nutritional supplements etc. you are using (both prescribed by your GP and on your own initiative).
- **Contact your GP to let them know which antibiotic therapy** you are receiving to treat your infection.

## ADVICE

- If you have been diagnosed with hypersensitivity to certain antibiotics, please inform your hospital doctor. Meropenem must be used with caution in patients with a **known hypersensitivity** to penicillin-like antibiotics.
- If you notice any **severe hypersensitivity reactions** such as a skin rash (across your entire body), itchiness, a tight chest, low blood pressure, fever or shivering, or swelling of your lips, tongue or throat, you must notify your GP immediately.
- If you have previously suffered from **jaundice or liver impairment**, you must tell your attending doctor. Extra care is required for this group of patients.
- If you suffer from **persistent or severe diarrhoea**, even after your therapy has been stopped, you must notify your GP immediately.
- Please **check your body temperature** on a regular basis, preferably at the same time every day and ideally in the evenings.

## WHEN AND WHO TO CONTACT

- ✓ Please report to the emergency unit:
  - if you suffer from rigours (with a fever over 38 °C).
- ✓ Please contact your GP:
  - if you experience the following symptoms: chills, headache, sore throat, stomach cramps or a burning feeling when urinating. Never take medicines on your own initiative if you suspect that you have an infection.
  - if you suffer a reaction to the antibiotic itself: signs of an allergic reaction, severe diarrhoea, skin rash or bleeding.
- ✓ Please contact the home nurse:
  - if you have any problems with the catheter: painful veins, redness, swelling, a hot feeling and/or pain around the catheter.

## USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

- ✓ OPAT team at the hospital:
  - Telephone: +32 16 34 32 74  
(available between 08:30 and 16:30 on working days)
  - E-mail: [OPAT@uzleuven.be](mailto:OPAT@uzleuven.be). Your question will be answered as soon as possible, but it may take up to 48 hours to get back to you. Our inbox is not monitored during the weekend.

This brochure is also available on  
[www.uzleuven.be/en/brochure/700850](http://www.uzleuven.be/en/brochure/700850).





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