

# atezolizumab (subcut)

## for injection under the skin

**Pronunciation:** A-teh-zoh-LIZ-yoo-mab

**Other Name(s):** Tecentriq® SC

**Appearance:** colourless to slightly yellow solution

This handout gives general information about this cancer medication.

You will learn:

- who to contact for help
- what the medication is
- how it is given
- what to expect while on medication



This handout was created by Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) together with patients and their caregivers who have also gone through cancer treatment. It is meant to help support you through your cancer treatment and answer some of your questions.

**This information does not replace the advice of your health care team. Always talk to your health care team about your treatment.**

### Who do I contact if I have questions or need help?

My cancer health care provider is: \_\_\_\_\_

During the day I should contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Evenings, weekends and holidays: \_\_\_\_\_

## What is this treatment for?

Atezolizumab (subcut) is used to treat certain types of cancers such as lung, liver, or breast cancers.

## What should I do before I start this treatment?

Tell your health care team if you have or had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have / had:

- an organ transplant
- immune conditions (such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn's, rheumatoid arthritis or lupus)
- heart, kidney, liver, lung problems
- serious infections (such as hepatitis B or HIV)
- problems with hormone producing glands such as your thyroid, pituitary, adrenal glands or pancreas
- diabetes, or
- any allergies.

Tell your health care team if you are taking medications called corticosteroids (such as prednisone). They may affect how your treatment works.



### Remember To:

- ✓ Tell your health care team about all of the other medications you are taking.
- ✓ Keep taking other medications that have been prescribed for you, unless you have been told not to by your health care team.

You will have a blood test to check for hepatitis B before starting treatment. See the [Hepatitis B and Cancer Medications](#) pamphlet for more information.

## How is this treatment given?

- This drug is given under your skin using a small needle (subcutaneous or Subcut). Talk to your health care team about your treatment schedule.
- If you missed your treatment appointment, talk to your health care team to find out what to do.

### DO this while on treatment

- ✓ DO check with your health care team before getting any vaccinations, surgery, dental work or other medical procedures.
- ✓ DO tell your health care team about any serious infections that you have now or have had in the past.
- ✓ **DO tell your health care team about ANY new symptom you develop. You may need urgent medical treatment.**

### DO NOT do this while on treatment



- ✗ DO NOT take any other medications, such as vitamins, over-the-counter (non-prescription) drugs, or natural health products without checking with your health care team.
- ✗ DO NOT start any complementary or alternative therapies, such as acupuncture or homeopathic products, without checking with your health care team.
- ✗ DO NOT use tobacco products (such as smoking cigarettes or vaping) or drink alcohol while on treatment without talking to your health care team first. Smoking and drinking can make side effects worse and make your treatment not work as well.

## Will this treatment interact with other medications or natural health products?

Although this medication is unlikely to interact with other medications, vitamins, foods and natural health products, tell your health care team about all of your:

- prescription and over-the-counter (non-prescription) medications and all other drugs, such as cannabis/marijuana (medical or recreational)
- natural health products such as vitamins, herbal teas, homeopathic medicines, and other supplements

Check with your health care team before starting or stopping any of them.



### Talk to your health care team **BEFORE** taking or using these :

- Anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen (Advil<sup>®</sup> or Motrin<sup>®</sup>), naproxen (Aleve<sup>®</sup>) or Aspirin<sup>®</sup>.
- Over-the-counter products such as dimenhydrinate (Gravol<sup>®</sup>)
- Natural health products such as St. John's Wort
- Supplements such as vitamin C
- Grapefruit juice
- Alcoholic drinks
- Tobacco
- All other drugs, such as marijuana or cannabis (medical or recreational)

## What to do if you feel unwell, have pain, a headache or a fever

- ✓ **Always** check your temperature to see if you have a fever **before** taking any medications for fever or pain (such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®)).
  - Fever can be a sign of infection that may need treatment right away.
  - If you take these medications before you check for fever, they may lower your temperature and you may not know you have an infection.

### How to check for fever:

Keep a digital (electronic) thermometer at home and take your temperature if you feel hot or unwell (for example, chills, headache, mild pain).

- You have a fever if your temperature taken **in your mouth (oral temperature)** is:
    - 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time
- OR
- 38.0°C (100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour.



### If you do have a fever:

- ✓ **Try to contact your health care team. If you are not able to talk to them for advice, you MUST get emergency medical help right away.**
- ✓ Ask your health care team for the [Fever](#) pamphlet for more information.

**If you do not have a fever** but have mild symptoms such as headache or mild pain:

- ✓ Ask your health care team about the right medication for you. **Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)** is a safe choice for most people.



**Talk to your health care team before you start taking** ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or ASA (Aspirin®), as they may increase your chance of bleeding or interact with your cancer treatment.



Talk to your health care team if you already take **low dose aspirin** for a medical condition (such as a heart problem). It may still be safe to take.

## How will this treatment affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?

**Talk to your health care team about:**

- How this treatment may affect your sexual health
- How this treatment may affect your ability to have a baby, if this applies to you

This treatment may harm an unborn baby. Tell your health care team if you or your partner are pregnant, become pregnant during treatment, or are breastfeeding.

- If there is **any** chance of pregnancy happening, you and your partner together must use **2 effective forms of birth control** at the same time until at least **5 months** after your last treatment dose. Talk to your health care team about which birth control options are best for you.
- Do not breastfeed while on this treatment and for at least **5 months** after your last dose.

## What are the side effects of this treatment?

Atezolizumab (subcut) makes your immune system work harder. Your immune system is what fights infections and your cancer.

When your immune system is working harder, you may have side effects in your bowels, liver, lungs, skin, kidneys, and other organs. You may also have changes in hormone levels in your body.

These side effects may be mild or may become serious or life-threatening in rare cases.

They may happen during your treatment or weeks to months after your treatment ends.

Some things to watch for are:

- diarrhea
- a new cough
- problems with breathing
- rash
- any other new symptom

**If you have side effects, you must talk to your health care team right away. You may need urgent treatment.**

The following table lists side effects that you may have when getting atezolizumab (subcut) treatment. The table is set up to list the most common side effects first and the least common last. It is unlikely that you will have all of the side effects listed and you may have some that are not listed.

Read over the side effect table so that you know what to look for and when to get help. Refer to this table if you experience any side effects while on atezolizumab (subcut) treatment.

Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Infection</b></p> <p>(May be severe)</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you feel hot or unwell (for example if you have chills or a new cough), you <b>must</b> check your temperature to see if you have a fever.</li> <li>• Do not take medications that treat a fever before you take your temperature (for example, Tylenol®, acetaminophen, Advil® or ibuprofen).</li> <li>• Do not eat or drink anything hot or cold right before taking your temperature.</li> </ul> <p>You have a fever if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time OR</li> <li>• 38.0°C (100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash your hands often to prevent infection.</li> <li>• Check with your doctor before getting any vaccines, surgeries, medical procedures or visiting your dentist.</li> <li>• Keep a digital thermometer at home so you can easily check for a fever.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have a fever:</b></p> <p><b>If you have a fever, try to contact your health care team. If you are unable to talk to the team for advice, you must get emergency medical help right away.</b></p>	<p>If you have a fever, try to contact your health care team. If you are unable to talk to the team for advice, you <b>MUST</b> get emergency medical help right away</p>
<p><b>Fatigue</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling of tiredness or low energy that lasts a long time and does not go away with rest or sleep.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>

Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be active. Aim to get 30 minutes of moderate exercise (you are able to talk comfortably while exercising) on most days.</li> <li>• Check with your health care team before starting any new exercise.</li> <li>• Pace yourself, do not rush. Put off less important activities. Rest when you need to.</li> <li>• Ask family or friends to help you with things like housework, shopping, and child or pet care.</li> <li>• Eat well and drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water or other liquids every day (unless your health care team has told you to drink more or less).</li> <li>• Avoid driving or using machinery if you are feeling tired.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Fatigue</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Rash</b></p> <p>(May be severe)</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your skin may look red or feel warm, like a sunburn.</li> <li>• Your skin may have bumps, itch, burn, sting or feel very tender when touched.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>To prevent and treat dry skin:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use fragrance-free skin moisturizer.</li> <li>• Protect your skin from the sun and the cold.</li> <li>• Use sunscreen with UVA and UVB protection and a SPF of at least 30.</li> <li>• Avoid perfumed products and lotions that contain alcohol.</li> <li>• Drink 6 to 8 cups of non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated liquids each day, unless your health care team has told you to drink more or less.</li> </ul> <p><b>Talk to your health care team for advice.</b></p>	<p>Talk to your health care team for advice.</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>In rare cases, rash may be severe if:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rash covers more than a third of your skin (for example your whole trunk, or an arm AND a leg) or</li> <li>• The rash causes your skin to blister or peel.</li> </ul> <p><b>Talk to your health care team. If you are unable to talk to the team for advice, you must get emergency medical help right away.</b></p>	<p>Talk to your health care team. If you are unable to talk to the team for advice, you must get emergency medical help right away.</p>
<p><b>Low appetite</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of interest in food or not feeling hungry.</li> <li>• Weight loss.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to eat your favourite foods.</li> <li>• Eat small meals throughout the day.</li> <li>• You may need to take meal supplements to help keep your weight up.</li> <li>• Talk to your health care team if you have no appetite.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Loss of Appetite</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>
<p><b>Mild joint, muscle pain or cramps</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New pain in your muscles or joints, muscle cramps, or feeling achy.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take pain medication (acetaminophen or opioids such as codeine, morphine, hydromorphone, oxycodone) as prescribed.</li> <li>• Read the above section: <b>"What to do if you feel unwell, have pain, a headache or a fever"</b> before taking acetaminophen (Tylenol®), ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or Aspirin. These medications may hide an infection that needs treatment or they may increase your risk of bleeding.</li> <li>• Rest often and try light exercise (such as walking) as it may help.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Pain</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Anemia (low red blood cells)</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may feel more tired or weaker than normal.</li> <li>Pale skin and cold hands and feet.</li> <li>You may feel short of breath, dizzy or lightheaded.</li> <li>This may occur in days to weeks after your treatment starts.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>If your health care team has told you that you have anemia (low red blood cells):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rest often and eat well.</li> <li>Light exercise, such as walking may help.</li> <li>You may need medication or a blood transfusion.</li> <li>If it is very bad, your doctor may need to make changes to your treatment regimen.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>
<p><b>Cough and feeling short of breath</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may have a cough and feel short of breath.</li> <li>Symptoms that commonly occur with a cough are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>wheezing or a whistling breathing</li> <li>runny nose</li> <li>sore throat</li> <li>heartburn</li> <li>weight loss</li> <li>fever and chills</li> </ul> </li> <li>Rarely this may be severe with chest pain, trouble breathing or coughing up blood.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your health care team. If you are not able to talk to your health care team for advice, and you have a fever or severe symptoms, you <b>MUST</b> get emergency medical help right away</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check your temperature to see if you have a fever. Read the above section <b>"What to do if you feel unwell, have pain, a headache or a fever"</b>.</li> <li>• If you have a fever, try to talk to your health care team. <b>If you are not able to talk to them for advice, you MUST get emergency medical help right away.</b></li> <li>• <b>If you have a severe cough with chest pain, trouble breathing or you are coughing up blood, get medical help right away.</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Nausea and vomiting</b></p> <p>(Generally mild)</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nausea is feeling like you need to throw up. You may also feel light-headed.</li> <li>• You may feel nausea within hours to days after your treatment.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>To help prevent nausea:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it once it happens.</li> <li>• Drink clear liquids and have small meals. Get fresh air and rest.</li> <li>• Do not eat spicy, fried foods or foods with a strong smell.</li> <li>• Limit caffeine (like coffee, tea) and avoid alcohol.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have nausea or vomiting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your rescue (as-needed) anti-nausea medication(s) as prescribed.</li> <li>• Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Nausea &amp; Vomiting</a> pamphlet for more information.</li> <li>• Talk to your health care team if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ nausea lasts more than 48 hours</li> <li>◦ vomiting lasts more than 24 hours or if it is severe</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your healthcare team if nausea lasts more than 48 hours or vomiting lasts more than 24 hours or if it is severe</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Constipation</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having bowel movements (going poo) less often than normal.</li> <li>• Small hard stools (poo) that look like pellets.</li> <li>• The need to push hard and strain to have any stool (poo) come out.</li> <li>• Stomach ache or cramps.</li> <li>• A bloated belly, feeling of fullness, or discomfort.</li> <li>• Leaking of watery stools (poo).</li> <li>• Lots of gas or burping.</li> <li>• Nausea or vomiting</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>To help prevent constipation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to eat more fiber rich foods like fruits with skin, leafy greens and whole grains.</li> <li>• Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day unless your health care team has told you to drink more or less.</li> <li>• Be Active. Exercise can help to keep you regular.</li> <li>• If you take opioid pain medication, ask your health care team if eating more fibre is right for you.</li> </ul> <p><b>To help treat constipation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have not had a bowel movement in 2 to 3 days you may need to take a laxative (medication to help you poo) to help you have regular bowel movements. Ask your health care team what to do.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Constipation</a> Pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>
<p><b>Diarrhea</b></p> <p>(May be severe)</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loose, watery, unformed stool (poo) that may happen days to weeks after you get your treatment.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your health care team for advice.</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>If you have diarrhea:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take anti-diarrhea medication if your health care team prescribed it or told you to take it.</li> <li>• Do not eat foods or drinks with artificial sweetener (like chewing gum or 'diet' drinks), coffee and alcohol, until your diarrhea has stopped.</li> <li>• Eat many small meals and snacks instead of 2 or 3 large meals.</li> <li>• Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day, unless your health care team has told you to drink more or less.</li> <li>• Talk to your health care team if you can't drink 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day when you have diarrhea. You may need to drink special liquids with salt and sugar, called Oral Rehydration Therapy.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Diarrhea</a> pamphlet for more information.</p> <p><b>Talk to your health care team for advice.</b></p> <p><b>In rare cases, your diarrhea may be severe due to inflammation of the intestines if:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have blood in your stool (poo) or</li> <li>• You have more than 4 bowel movements (going poo) a day (if that is not normal for you)</li> </ul> <p>If this happens, talk to your health care team or go to the emergency room right away.</p> <p><b>Talk to your health care team. If you are unable to talk to the team for advice, you must get emergency medical help right away</b></p>	<p>Talk to your health care team. If you are unable to talk to the team for advice, you must get emergency medical help right away.</p>

**Other rare, but serious side effects are possible with this treatment.**

If you have **any** of the following, talk to your cancer health care team or get emergency medical help right away:

- peeing more than normal and feeling very thirsty
- signs of an allergy such as itchiness, rash, swollen lips, face or tongue, chest and throat tightness

For more information on how to manage your symptoms ask your health care provider, or visit:  
<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms>.

## Notes

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### May 2025 New patient information sheet

*The information set out in the medication information sheets, regimen information sheets, and symptom management information (for patients) contained in the Drug Formulary (the "Formulary") is intended to be used by health professionals and patients for informational purposes only. The information is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, drug interactions or side effects of a certain drug, nor should it be used to indicate that use of a particular drug is safe, appropriate or effective for a given condition.*

*A patient should always consult a healthcare provider if he/she has any questions regarding the information set out in the Formulary. The information in the Formulary is not intended to act as or replace medical advice and should not be relied upon in any such regard. All uses of the Formulary are subject to clinical judgment and actual prescribing patterns may not follow the information provided in the Formulary.*