

ANTIBIOTIC TREATMENT WITH CIPROFLOXACIN FOR EXPOSURE TO A BIOLOGICAL AGENT

Information for people who may have been exposed to:

Unknown* Anthrax* Plague* Tularaemia*

*Doctor, Pharmacist, or healthcare provider to tick box or delete as appropriate

Summary

You are being given these antibiotics to prevent the possible development of disease. As indicated above, you may have been exposed to the bacteria that cause potentially serious diseases including Anthrax, Plague or Tularaemia. It may be that the biological agent has not yet been identified.

You have been given an antibiotic called ciprofloxacin that has been shown to be effective against many bacteria, including those that cause Anthrax, Plague or Tularaemia.

It is important that you take this antibiotic for:

Anthrax: 60 days (8 weeks)*

Plague: 7 days (1 week)*

Tularaemia: 21 days (3 weeks)*

Unknown: The designated centre will inform you when you collect further supplies.

You have been given an initial supply of 3 days treatment so you must go to the designated centre who will provide you with the rest of your course (contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647 to find out where your nearest designated centre is). Do this within the next 3 days.

Ciprofloxacin use for the preventative treatment of Anthrax, Plague or Tularaemia

Ciprofloxacin is a broad-spectrum antibiotic licensed for the preventative treatment of anthrax but not plague or tularaemia. This is because, while ciprofloxacin has been shown to be effective against the bacteria that cause these illnesses, there has not been enough experience using it in people with these rare illnesses, to enable it to be licensed for all its uses.

Ciprofloxacin is not usually recommended for use in pregnant women. In this case the benefits of using ciprofloxacin to prevent the possible onset of this illness outweigh the potential risks of the drug. Further details of these risks are outlined in the Patient Information Leaflet you have received with your medicine, or contact your doctor or healthcare provider for further information.

Nursing mothers should not breastfeed during treatment with Ciprofloxacin.

How should I take ciprofloxacin?

Adults: (including pregnant women) You should take ONE tablet (500mg) by mouth TWO TIMES a day (morning and evening).

You should take this medicine with a full glass of water. Drink several glasses of water each day while you are taking this medicine (if you do not have a problem with your heart or kidneys). It is best to take this medicine 2 hours after a meal. If it upsets your stomach you may take it with food, but do not take it with milk, yoghurt, or cheese.

Do not stop taking your medicine even if you feel well unless your doctor or healthcare provider tells you to stop. If you stop taking this medicine before completing the course you may become ill.

If you miss a dose take the missed dose as soon as possible. If your next dose is nearly due, wait until then to take your medicine and skip the missed dose. Do not take two doses at the same time. If you are unclear on whether to take your dose please contact your doctor, pharmacist, or healthcare provider.

What further information do I need?

You will also be supplied with a Patient Information Leaflet. It is important to read this in conjunction with this leaflet. It outlines any precautions you may need to take, any foods or medicines that should be avoided and what side-effects to look for when taking ciprofloxacin.

Information for people who may have been exposed to a biological agent

Key Messages:

You may have been exposed to a biological agent. Investigations are underway to identify the agent. You will be informed as soon as the result is known.

Meanwhile, **it is very important that you:**

- Take the Ciprofloxacin tablets provided. There are enough for 3 days supply. You must visit your **designated centre** to obtain further antibiotics to prevent the disease developing. **It is extremely important you take the full course of antibiotics – the length of time will depend on which agent is identified.**
- Go to the designated centre immediately if you become unwell.

What is Ciprofloxacin?

Ciprofloxacin is a broad spectrum antibiotic used to treat a wide range of bacteria.

How might I have been exposed to a biological agent?

If bacteria have been released into the air, it is possible that inhaling bacteria into the lungs may lead to disease developing in the lung or bacteria may enter through small cuts and abrasions leading to skin lesions.

Can the infection be passed from person to person?

This depends on which agent is involved e.g. Anthrax and Tularemia disease of the lung cannot be passed person to person, but plague can, but only when the disease has developed and cough is present. Anthrax disease of the skin can be passed person to person.

What can I do to prevent the disease?

You will be given a 3 day supply of antibiotics to start your treatment. **You must go to your designated centre who will provide you with the rest of the course of Ciprofloxacin. Do this within the next 3 days.**

Ciprofloxacin has been used for many years and has been shown to be safe, although there may be some side effects, which will be listed on the patient information sheet. If you develop side effects, call the designated centre immediately. You may need to be switched to a different antibiotic. **It is most important you complete the full course of antibiotic treatment.**

This treatment is usually effective at preventing disease in people who have been exposed to the bacteria. **It is still possible to develop disease even when taking antibiotics so you should watch for symptoms of the disease.**

What symptoms should I look out for?

The first symptoms of disease may develop 1 to 7 days after exposure, but it may take up to 8 weeks.

People with disease in their lungs develop a 'flu like illness with fever (temperature over 38°C), headache, muscle aches, cough and generalised weakness. A few days after this there is a rapid onset of shortness of breath. Depending on the agent, the cough may be dry or productive of sputum.

If the skin has been infected (usually on parts of the body not covered by clothing) different types of skin lesion may develop – these include small painless, itchy pimples 3 days later (range 1 to 7 days), which develop into ulcers, or swellings under the skin.

What should I do if I think I am developing the disease?

If you feel unwell with flu like symptoms or have difficulty breathing, you should go to the designated centre immediately, taking this information sheet with you.

If you notice a suspicious skin lesion, you should go to the designated centre as soon as possible. It is important to get treatment quickly as skin infections may sometimes lead to blood poisoning.

What if the bacteria have got onto my clothes?

Once the bacteria have settled, there is only a low risk that they could be released back into the air. However, all clothes and personal effects that may have been contaminated must be removed (using gloves), "double bagged", sealed and stored until a special collection has been arranged for their disposal. Everyone, who has been at the site of possible exposure, should shower thoroughly with soap and water.

Why do I have to leave my personal details?

You should either complete the form provided or give your personal details, so that you can be contacted at home for health care follow-up.

Can I go to work?

There is no reason to stop work, provided you are well and taking your tablets.