

Interstitial Lung Disease: Medicines



Interstitial lung disease is a group of conditions with inflammation and scarring around the tiny air sacs (alveoli) in the lungs. The changes make it hard to take in oxygen. Often, healthcare providers don't know the cause. This is called idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. Known causes are conditions such as sarcoidosis and rheumatoid arthritis. You can also get it from breathing in hazardous materials, such as mold or asbestos. Some medicines, chemotherapy, and radiation treatments can also cause interstitial lung disease.

Treatment with medicines

Medicines may be prescribed to help reduce inflammation and stop more scarring. Take all medicines as instructed by your healthcare provider. Talk with your provider or pharmacist if you have questions or concerns about your medicines. Before using any over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, or herbal supplements, talk with your pharmacist about possible medicine interactions.

Medicines

Medicines that reduce inflammation or the immune system's reaction may be prescribed for some people with interstitial lung disease. But they don't work for everyone. In fact, newer therapies that lessen fibrosis or scarring have been recently introduced. They are called pirfenidone and nintedanib. They are only used for people with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. They slow the rate of fibrosis and lung scarring, but are not considered a cure for the disease.

Until recently, the medicines below were used for pulmonary fibrosis. They are now not as commonly used or used with caution due to potentially harmful side effects, especially when used long term:

- Prednisone
- Azathioprine
- Cyclophosphamide

Your healthcare provider may prescribe more than one of these medicines. They may have serious side effects. Talk with your provider about what to expect if you take these medicines.

Taking medicines



Try these tips to prevent problems with your medicines:

- Take your medicine as you were told to, at the same time each day. Make it a habit.
- Don't run out of medicine. Order more while you still have at least a week's supply left. Give yourself more time if you order by mail.
- Take your medicines with you when you travel. Take an extra week's supply in case of travel delays. If you check your luggage at the airport, keep your medicines with you and not in your checked bags.
- Buy all of your medicines at the same pharmacy, if you can.
- Get a pill organizer with sections for the days of the week and times of day. Fill it once a week. Keep it in a place that will remind you to take your medicine. If you need help organizing your medicines, ask a family member or friend.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you have trouble paying for your medicines. They may be able to prescribe less expensive medicines. And they may have free samples.

Make a list of all your medicines. This includes herbs and other supplements. Keep the list handy:

- Show the list to all of your healthcare providers and your pharmacist.
- Include the name of the medicine and why you take it. Write down how much you take and when you take it.
- Change your list if your medicines change.
- Keep a copy of the list in your wallet or purse, or on your electronic device. In case of an emergency, make sure a close family member or friend has an updated list.

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