Skyrizi (Risankizumab)

What is Skyrizi?

Skyrizi (also referred to by its generic name, Risankizumab) is a biologic medication that is approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). It is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) to treat moderate to severe psoriasis

The NICE and the SMC guidance also state that Skyrizi, alone or with methotrexate, is recommended as an option for treating active psoriatic arthritis in adults whose condition has not responded well enough to disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs) or who cannot tolerate these treatments.

Skyrizi is taken by an injection under the skin via a pre-filled syringe or pre-filled injection pen.

How does Skyrizi work?

Skyrizi blocks the activity of interleukin 23 (IL-23), a chemical 'messenger' in the immune system that signals other cells to cause inflammation.

In people with psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis, the immune system is overactive and creates too much inflammation, which leads to the development of psoriasis symptoms.

Skyrizi is very precise and binds to a specific part of the IL-23 messenger, called p19. This then blocks IL-23 from sending out the inflammation signals and processes, preventing some of the inflammation from occurring and leading to an improvement in psoriasis for some people who take it.

In psoriatic arthritis, the inflammation can contribute to joint pain, stiffness and swelling. Skyrizi works by decreasing this swelling in the joints, preventing damage and reducing pain and stiffness.

Who is Skyrizi for?

Skyrizi is for adults with moderate to severe psoriasis who have not had a good response from or cannot take or tolerate other systemic treatments including ciclosporin, methotrexate or PUVA. It can also be used to treat active psoriatic arthritis in adults whose condition has not responded well enough to disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs).

You will usually need to have tried these treatments before you can be offered Skyrizi. If you have tried these treatments but they did not work, Skyrizi might be an option for you.

Skyrizi can also be used to treat children and adolescents from 6 to 18 years with moderate to severe plaque psoriasis. The dosage given will be determined by body weight.

Who should not take Skyrizi?

People with active infections should not start Skyrizi. Because of the effect Skyrizi has on the immune system, you will be monitored for infections throughout treatment, and you will be tested for latent (hidden) TB, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV before starting treatment.

In most cases, pregnant women should not be treated with Skyrizi, and women should not breastfeed during treatment with Skyrizi. Women should avoid becoming pregnant for twenty-one weeks after treatment has stopped.

How is Skyrizi used?

Skyrizi is taken as an injection under the skin via a pre-filled syringe or pre-filled injection pen. The recommended dose is 150mg.

The injection should be administered in areas such as the thigh or abdomen avoiding where the skin is tender, bruised or affected by psoriasis.

When you begin taking Skyrizi you will have your first injection, followed four weeks later by your next. After that Skyrizi is usually taken every 12 weeks. Most people will be trained by a nurse to give the injection to themselves.

People taking Skyrizi are likely to need regular blood tests – usually arranged by a Dermatology or Rheumatology specialist, or by their own GP, to monitor general health whilst on the treatment.

What are the side effects of Skyrizi?

As with all medications, some side effects are possible when taking Skyrizi. It is important to remember that not every person taking a medication will get all, or even any, of the possible side effects listed.

Many side effects of Skyrizi are mild and do not cause most people to stop taking it. Skyrizi was first used as a treatment for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis in 2019 and is a relatively new treatment. As such, this side effect data comes from clinical trials, but will continue to be updated as more 'real-world' experience with the treatment is collected.

The most common side effects of Skyrizi are upper respiratory tract infections with a sore throat and stuffy nose, fatigue, fungal skin infection, headache, itching and injection site reactions (such as redness or burning of the skin where the treatment is injected).

Because Skyrizi works by suppressing part of the activity in the immune system, it can make people taking it more prone to infections than they would usually be. Talk to your GP or seek medical help immediately if you have any symptoms of a serious infection such as fever, flu-like symptoms, night sweats, shortness of breath, a persistent cough, red and painful skin or a rash with blisters. If a serious infection occurs, a doctor will most likely stop Skyrizi.

Although side effects are possible with this, and any treatment, it is important to remember that people taking Skyrizi have regular blood tests to check for health issues and will be regularly reviewed by a specialist.

For a full list of potential side effects, please speak to your Dermatologist, Rheumatologist or Pharmacist, or refer to the Patient Information Leaflet that comes with the Skyrizi injection.

How long will Skyrizi take to work?

It can take several weeks before a person's psoriasis improves after they start taking Skyrizi. If considerable improvement is not seen in 16 weeks, treatment with Skyrizi will be stopped. If this happens, a Dermatologist or a Rheumatologist should discuss the next available options with you – there are a number of other biologic or systemic treatments that can be tried if Skyrizi does not work.

Can I have immunisations (vaccinations) whilst on Skyrizi?

It is important that when having vaccinations, you check with your Dermatology or Rheumatology team as to whether you need to stop or delay taking Skyrizi as they will have the most up-to-date advice regarding the continuing of your treatment at this time.

People taking Skyrizi are more at risk of infections and so should be vaccinated against pneumonia and have an annual flu vaccination administered by injection. However, not all vaccinations are safe for people taking Skyrizi and 'live' vaccinations (for example the flu vaccine administered through the nose, measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), yellow fever, chickenpox or shingles) should not be given whilst on Skyrizi. If you require immunisation with a live vaccine, Skyrizi should be stopped for at least 21 weeks beforehand (12 months in the case of the shingles vaccine) and until 4 weeks after the vaccination.

Check with a doctor, nurse or pharmacist before having any vaccinations or taking other medication if you are not sure.

How safe and effective is Skyrizi?

Skyrizi has been used to treat moderate to severe psoriasis in England and Wales and Scotland since 2019 and to treat psoriatic arthritis in in England and Wales and Scotland since 2022.

If you have been prescribed Skyrizi for the treatment of your psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis, you may be asked to take part in the British Association of Dermatologists' Biologics and Immunomodulators Register (BADBIR) which is an observational study for people with psoriasis. This register compares the safety of different treatments for psoriasis to see how well they work.

For more information on BADBIR, please see the website: www.badbir.org

For more information on BSR-PsA, please see the website: https://w3.abdn.ac.uk/hsru/BSR-PsA/Public/Public/index.cshtml

The information in this resource is not intended to replace that of a healthcare professional. If you have any concerns or questions about your treatment, do discuss this with your doctor and always read the patient information leaflet to make sure you are using them correctly.

For more information, or for a list of resources used in the production of this information sheet, please contact Psoriasis UK.

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