

# Medication Safety Notice

No. SA 21 / 05 page 1 of 2

Issued by the Office of the Chief Pharmacist, SA Health  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/medicationsafety](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/medicationsafety)



A patient **Safety Notice** strongly advises the implementation of particular recommendations or solutions to improve quality and safety.

## We recommend you inform:

- General Managers
- Pharmacy Directors
- Medical Directors
- Clinical Directors
- Nursing Directors
- Drug and Therapeutics Committees
- Medication Safety Committees
- Safety and Quality Units
- Clinical Governance

## Contact details:

T: (08) 8204 1944

E: [HealthMedicationSafety@sa.gov.au](mailto:HealthMedicationSafety@sa.gov.au)

## Tocilizumab Serious Shortage Update: Statewide Conservation Measures

### Purpose

To provide an update on the global shortage of tocilizumab (Actemra®).

### Background

Multiple presentations of tocilizumab injections are in **CRITICAL SHORTAGE**, due to unpredicted global demand as a result of the treatment for COVID-19. See [SA Health Medication Safety Notice 21/04 Shortage of tocilizumab medicines](#).

The TGA, state and territory health departments, Australian Rheumatology Association (ARA), and Roche, the sponsor of Actemra® in Australia, are monitoring tocilizumab supplies and developing strategies to immediately reduce usage and conserve supply.

Supply of tocilizumab is **severely limited until early 2022**. Based on current use patterns, it is estimated that supplies will only last the Australian market for **8 weeks**. It is imperative that tocilizumab conservation strategies are implemented as soon as possible, with the aim to **reduce national usage by 50%**.

**Conservation of tocilizumab supply is critical.**

Conservation of supply is critical to support access for patients who have no other treatment options.

### Clinical Recommendations

Tocilizumab is **RESTRICTED** to the following critical indications where no other alternatives are suitable:

- > Giant Cell Arteritis (GCA)
- > Systemic juvenile idiopathic arthritis (sJIA)
- > Cytokine Release Syndrome (CRS)
- > COVID-19 treatment (as per the [National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce Guidelines](#))

### Tocilizumab for non-COVID-19 indications

Clinicians are to follow patient management advice published in the [joint statement](#) from the Australian Rheumatology Association, Arthritis Australia, and the TGA to conserve tocilizumab supplies. This applies for existing and new patients.

### Tocilizumab for COVID-19 treatment

The [National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce](#) advises that **baricitinib** should be considered as an alternative to tocilizumab, unless contraindicated.

# Medication Safety Notice

No. SA 21 / 05 page 2 of 2

Issued by the Office of the Chief Pharmacist, SA Health  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/medicationsafety](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/medicationsafety)



A patient **Safety Notice** strongly advises the implementation of particular recommendations or solutions to improve quality and safety.

## We recommend you inform:

- General Managers
- Pharmacy Directors
- Medical Directors
- Clinical Directors
- Nursing Directors
- Drug and Therapeutics Committees
- Medication Safety Committees
- Safety and Quality Units
- Clinical Governance

## Contact details:

T: (08) 8204 1944

E: [HealthMedicationSafety@sa.gov.au](mailto:HealthMedicationSafety@sa.gov.au)

See the '[Tocilizumab for adults](#)' recommendation in the Australian guidelines for the clinical care of people with COVID-19, and the [full recommendations for conservation of tocilizumab](#) from the Medicine Availability Working Group (MAWG) of state and territory health department representatives for further information.

## Monitoring

- > SA Pharmacy will continue to monitor tocilizumab stock levels at SA Health sites.

## Action required by SA Health staff and services

1. Ensure all relevant clinicians/committees are aware of this notice.
2. Ensure all clinicians use tocilizumab in compliance with the above clinical recommendations.
3. Implement a local approach in conjunction with the Pharmacy, Infectious Diseases, Haematology and Rheumatology departments, and/or other local specialists as appropriate to **immediately conserve supplies of tocilizumab**.
4. Local Health Networks should work with SA Pharmacy to monitor and ensure appropriate use of tocilizumab.

## Further information

For any enquiries or concerns, please contact your pharmacist or pharmacy department directly; or email [HealthMedicationSafety@sa.gov.au](mailto:HealthMedicationSafety@sa.gov.au).

Refer to the [TGA website](#) for the most up to date information regarding the shortage.