

Find More Information at:

Autoimmunity

We hope this decision-making tree and brochure will assist you in making educated choices about your treatment plan. In the end you are responsible for the decision you make regarding adherence to the treatment suggested by your doctor.

Whatever decision you make, we strongly encourage you to communicate your decision with your doctor. The back panel of this brochure has a list of resources that also may be beneficial to your decision-making strategy.

When making decisions, many patients turn to Google. While Google is useful, please bear in mind that Google lists sites that have received the most “hits” or clicks. They may or may not always have the most reliable information.



National Institutes of Health
www.nih.gov

National Library of Medicine
Medline
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html

Federal Drug Administration
www.fda.gov/drugs

UpToDate
www.uptodate.com

WebMD
www.webmd.com

Other Resources:

Disease-Specific Organizations

National Coalition of Autoimmune Patient Groups
www.aarda.org/user_content/NCAPG.php

Pharmaceutical Manufacturers

Umbrella Organizations



American Autoimmune
Related Diseases Association, Inc.

American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association
22100 Gratiot Ave. • Eastpointe, MI 48021-2227
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New Therapies and Treatments

How Do I Know It's Safe?



Weighing the Risk, Understanding the Benefits



American Autoimmune
Related Diseases Association, Inc.

How Do I Know It's Safe?

Asking Questions

Doing Your Homework

Helping Patients Make Informed Decisions on New Therapies and Treatments

For the first time in generations, autoimmune disease patients are gaining access to new therapies. While many of these therapies may offer substantial benefit, they may also pose a real risk. Patients need methods of weighing the benefit/risk of using these new therapies. AARDA has developed an information tool that will help patients to make informed decisions about adherence to cutting edge treatments.

A recent study by the American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (AARDA) found that up to 30 percent of prescriptions for patients were never filled. The same survey revealed that only 35 percent of newly diagnosed patients relied on their physician's advice alone concerning medication. Here at AARDA, we understand that managing an autoimmune disease is complicated. Life becomes even more difficult if you are living with multiple diseases. Facing the diagnosis and the lifestyle changes it poses can be very challenging, but so are the decisions about available medications.

Things to consider about medications recommended for you may include whether to take them, whether or not to get a second opinion, how to find reliable information, and where to get additional information when you're having second thoughts about the specific medication you've been advised to take. Making the choice that is right for you can be a challenge. We understand why.

Facing the "Fear Factor"

Initially, you may fear the new diagnosis or deny that anything is wrong. These feelings often will make it hard to understand or remember what was explained to you about the medication. You may experience the "Fear Factor" when you read the inserts that come with the prescription or see ads on television that may scare you. When a patient delays filling the prescription, there may be a multitude of factors as to why. A patient may not have enough information to make an informed decision or the medication may be too expensive. These factors also play a role in what patients described in the survey as "vacations from medications," a practice many patients admitted to doing without informing their physicians. This can be harmful to you and should be discussed with your doctor.

Our survey found that patients were more likely to take a new medication and adhere to their treatment plan if they understood what the medication was supposed to do for them.

Physicians often do not explain to the patient what they expect the treatment to accomplish, and patients do not feel comfortable asking questions. Good questions to ask when being prescribed a new medication are "What is this medication for and what results can I expect?" "Is there any problem combining it with my other medications?" "What are the side effects?" "How do I take this medication?"

When searching for information, many patients turn to Google. While Google is useful, please bear in mind that Google simply lists sites that have received the most "hits" or clicks. They may or may not always have the most reliable information. Still other patients may turn to loved ones. Remember that everyone has an opinion and that individual advice may not be the best for your health. Many patients found that contacting a disease-specific organization proved helpful.

In some cases, after intense research, a patient may refuse to take the medication altogether. A patient may prefer to try an alternative approach. However, the patient should always discuss this with his or her doctor.

When a patient delays filling the prescription, there may be a multitude of factors as to why. A patient may have the Fear Factor, may not have enough information to make an informed decision, or may find the medication to be too expensive.

Using the Decision-Making Tree

We have provided you with a decision-making "tree" to help you through the process of weighing your choices. Our "Medication Decision Tree" is designed to guide you through necessary steps to make the decision that is right for you. Look over the branches on the tree to see where you may be currently in the decision-making process and what choices you are considering. Ask yourself the questions and review the choices that follow each option, weighing them carefully.

Your Physician Prescribes a New Medication

