Monoclonal Antibody Infusion: What You and Your Patients Need to Know

Overview

- **Indications:** Monoclonal antibody (mAb) infusion is an emergency use authorized treatment for eligible patients with mild or moderate COVID-19 symptoms. It can be used to treat COVID-19 progression in a high-risk patient who tests positive and to prevent COVID-19 in a high-risk patient who's been exposed. The Duke COVID Infusion team evaluates each patient individually to ensure they meet the treatment criteria.

- **Timing:** When given within 10 days of symptom onset to high-risk patients, it can significantly reduce the risk of hospitalization and help them recover more quickly.

- **Importance of vaccination:** This treatment is not a substitute for vaccination against COVID-19.

Inclusion Criteria

Patients must meet all of the following criteria to qualify for mAb infusion:

- Have a positive COVID-19 test with mild or moderate symptoms
- Have been symptomatic for less than 10 days
- Do not need oxygen

Patients eligible for mAb infusion include:

- People over age 65
- People with a BMI of 25 or greater
- People with certain chronic medical conditions, including kidney disease and heart disease
- People who are immunocompromised

Exclusion Criteria

mAbs are not authorized for use in patients who:

- Are hospitalized due to COVID-19
- Require oxygen therapy due to COVID-19
- Require chronic oxygen therapy due to an underlying non-COVID-19 related condition
- Are between the ages of 12-17 and weigh less than 88 pounds
- Are under age 12

All high-risk adults and high-risk youth ages 12-17 who weigh at least 88 pounds may be eligible for treatment.

Referring to Duke

Patients who may be eligible for mAbs can self-refer by calling the Duke COVID Infusion team.

Phone: 919-385-0431
Location: Duke Health Center at Southpoint, 6301 Herndon Rd, Durham, NC 27713
Cost: Free to eligible patients
What is in a monoclonal antibody infusion?

Monoclonal antibodies are lab-created proteins that stop the COVID-19 virus from reproducing. When the virus is unable to replicate, the viral load stays low. As a result, the symptoms that often land people in the hospital don’t worsen.

When is the best time to get the treatment?

For the treatment to be effective, it should be given within 10 days of symptom onset.

How long does the treatment take?

The one-time infusion takes 20 to 60 minutes to administer in an outpatient clinic. Patients are monitored for about an hour, then go home.

What are possible side effects from this treatment?

Side effects are rare (less than 1 in 100) but often occur within the first hour after the infusion. Allergic reactions are possible during or after the infusion and may include shortness of breath, rash, itching or dizziness.

Can patients get this infusion if they have been vaccinated?

Yes. If a patient has already been vaccinated and contracts COVID-19, they may still benefit from this treatment if indicated. The faster they receive the mAb infusion (ideally within 7 to 10 days of symptom onset), the more likely it is to stop the virus’s ability to reproduce.

What are high-risk factors for severe illness?

High-risk factors for severe illness can include: cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome or other developmental conditions; chronic kidney disease; being a current or former smoker; dementia or other neurological conditions; diabetes (type 1 or 2); heart disease including high blood pressure; immunosuppressive disease or medication; lung disease such as COPD, asthma or cystic fibrosis; obesity or being overweight; older age; pregnancy; regular use of a feeding tube or ventilator; sickle cell disease or thalassemia; stroke or cerebrovascular disease; and substance use disorders.

How does this treatment differ from other COVID-19 treatments?

Monoclonal antibody treatment helps stimulate the immune system and prevents serious illness. Other treatments such as Remdesivir are used to treat those that are already seriously ill with COVID-19. Remdesivir is FDA approved for the treatment of COVID-19 in hospitalized patients ages 12 and older who weigh at least 88 pounds. Monoclonal antibodies are for patients who are not hospitalized with COVID-19.