

Upadacitinib (Rinvoq)

What is Upadacitinib?

Upadacitinib is a medication that blocks the action of enzymes called Janus Kinases (JAKs). When these enzymes are blocked, immune cells have difficulty communicating with one another, interrupting the inflammatory process. It is used for patients with Ulcerative Colitis or Crohn's disease to decrease inflammation in the bowel. Upadacitinib is also used in patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis.

How is Upadacitinib taken?

- Upadacitinib is an oral tablet. It comes in 45 mg, 30 mg or 15 mg tablets. It is taken once daily. The usual loading dose is 45 mg once daily for 8 weeks for patients with ulcerative colitis or 45 mg **once daily** for 12 weeks for patients with Crohn's disease and then decreasing to the maintenance dose of 30 mg **once daily** thereafter.
- Although some patients can feel better quite quickly, in others it can take a little longer. Keep taking your medication.

What to keep in mind when taking Upadacitinib

- Before starting Upadacitinib, you should have a TB skin test, a chest X-ray and blood work done. Your doctor or nurse will speak to you about this.
- Upadacitinib can increase your risk of developing shingles. **Speak to your doctor or nurse about receiving the non-live shingles vaccine (Shingrix) prior to starting Upadacitinib.**
- You should not take your Upadacitinib if you have a severe infection that is causing fevers. Upadacitinib can make it harder for you to fight off infections. You should call your doctor if you develop fevers, you think you have an infection, or you have been given antibiotics to treat an infection.
- **You will need to have blood work done regularly** (usually every 3 or 4 months) to monitor your liver, blood cell counts and lipids. This helps your doctor and nurse check that the medication is not causing serious side effects.
- You should not receive "live" vaccines while you are taking Upadacitinib. Speak with your family doctor to ensure your vaccinations are up to date before starting Upadacitinib.

Possible side effects

More common side effects:

- Upadacitinib can increase your risk of any infection (and particularly shingles)
- Nausea, indigestion and watery diarrhea
- Acne with higher doses

Less common side effects:

- Liver problems (increased liver enzymes)
- Bone marrow suppression
- Small increased risk of malignancies
- Increased risk of developing blood clots

When to contact your doctor

Please contact your doctor if:

- Fevers
- If you are having surgery
- If you become pregnant or are planning to become pregnant. If you are planning to become pregnant, you must stop this medication at least 3 months in advance.
- If you plan to get any vaccinations

Other important information

- There are some medications such as ketoconazole, clarithromycin, and rifampin that should not be taken at the same time as you are taking Upadacitinib. Please speak with your doctor if you are starting a new medication.
- Upadacitinib should be stopped a few days before surgery. It can be restarted once things have healed and there is no sign of infection. If you are having surgery, talk to your doctor about when to stop the medicine.
- Upadacitinib has not been well studied in pregnancy and, at present, should not be taken if you are pregnant. **It is important to speak to your doctor if you are pregnant or are planning to become pregnant.**

Want to learn more?

Crohn's & Colitis UK

<https://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/info-support/information-about-crohns-and-colitis/all-information-about-crohns-and-colitis/treatments/upadacitinib>

If you have any questions, please contact your Gastroenterologist at London Digestive Disease Institute (519) 204-6333.