



Management of patients with past or present history of cardiovascular disease

Evidence-based Medicine

Official Recommendations

Expert opinion

Is there a risk of cardiovascular events occurring during abatacept therapy?

Cardiovascular events are uncommon during abatacept therapy.

During the abatacept development program (controlled trials and open-label extension phases), cardiovascular adverse events were exceedingly rare. They consisted of hypotension and hypertension, palpitations, tachycardia or bradycardia, congestive heart failure, coronary artery disease or myocardial infarction, and atrial fibrillation.

In the analysis of cumulative safety experience as of December 2009 (4), the cardiovascular disease incidence rates per 100 patient-years were reported as follows:

- 7.08; 95%CI, 6.03-8.26 in short-term periods
- 3.87; 95%CI, 3.47-4.31 in long-term periods
- 4.38; 95%CI, 3.99-4.79 in cumulative periods

What precautions should be taken before starting abatacept therapy in patients with a history of cardiovascular disease?

Cardiovascular disease does not contraindicate the use of abatacept. In patients with inadequately controlled or unstable heart disease (heart failure, coronary artery disease, or rhythm disorders) or in case of vascular disease (hypertension), common recommendations are to optimize cardiovascular drug regimen and/or to seek advice of a cardiologist before starting abatacept therapy.

What alarm symptoms suggest cardiovascular disease in patients receiving abatacept therapy?

As with all patients who present with RA, specific questions should be asked about dyspnea, chest pain, and palpitations. Blood pressure should be measured.

Management in case of cardiovascular disease

A diagnosis of hypertension should lead to the adjustment or introduction of antihypertensive treatment. In patients with very high blood pressure levels (diastolic blood pressure greater than 100 mm Hg), postponing the abatacept infusion until the hypertension is controlled may be advisable.

When in doubt, or when blood pressure control proves difficult to achieve, advice should be sought from a cardiologist.

When can abatacept therapy be resumed?

Abatacept therapy can be resumed a few days after achieving blood pressure control.

Does abatacept interact with ongoing cardiovascular drugs?

To date, there is no evidence that abatacept interacts with cardiovascular drugs.

Does abatacept interact with anticoagulant drugs?

To date, there is no evidence that abatacept interacts with oral or injectable anticoagulants.

Current knowledge about the risk of cardiovascular events (other than heart failure) during abatacept therapy

Patients with RA are at increased risk for cardiovascular events, mainly myocardial infarction and stroke (6, 7). This excess cardiovascular risk is related to systemic inflammation, which causes endothelial alterations and disturbances in lipid metabolism. No severe change in the cardiovascular risk has occurred with abatacept treatment, even after prolonged exposure (4).