

Date: November 1, 2021  
Memo To: All Island Health Staff and Physicians  
From: Richard Jones, Director, Pharmacy Services  
Infection Management Advisory Committee (IMAC)

**RE: tocilizumab injection or sarilumab injection for COVID-19: Use and Access**

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### **Situation:**

The BC COVID-19 Therapeutics Committee (CTC) revised their clinical practice guidance regarding tocilizumab injection for the treatment of patients with severe COVID-19. Due to increased global demand for tocilizumab injection as the fourth wave of the pandemic progresses, **tocilizumab is now given as a single 400 mg dose (for those weighing OVER 50 kg), rather than the 8 mg/kg weight-based strategy previously recommended. Sarilumab 400 mg remains an alternative IL-6 inhibitor option.**

### **Background:**

Tocilizumab injection and sarilumab injection are humanized monoclonal antibodies against the interleukin 6 (IL-6) receptor. **Both are non-Formulary for BC hospitals**, but approved by Health Canada for inflammatory conditions (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis). Some patients with COVID-19 develop severe disease, which is primarily driven by inflammatory cytokines such as IL-6. These drugs exert therapeutic effect by neutralizing these inflammatory mediators.

### **Guidance:**

Tocilizumab injection OR sarilumab injection are recommended for patients requiring life support due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 (i.e. not due to bacterial infection, pulmonary embolism etc). Support includes:

- high-flow oxygen (e.g. Optiflow) if flow rate greater than 30 L/min and FiO<sub>2</sub> greater than 0.4
- OR invasive or non-invasive ventilation
- OR vasopressor or inotropic support.

Tocilizumab or sarilumab must be administered within 24 hours of the initiation of life support measures. Patients admitted to hospital for more than 14 days with symptoms of COVID-19 should not receive tocilizumab or sarilumab for this indication.

**Dose:** tocilizumab 400 mg IV (single dose) OR sarilumab 400 mg IV (single dose)

**Use of tocilizumab injection or sarilumab injection is restricted to prescribing or approval by Intensivists or Infectious Disease physicians.**

To contact an Infectious Disease physician to review tocilizumab outside of the ICU, refer to the on-call schedule system: <https://medicalaffairs.viha.ca/oncall/BrowseSchedules/>. Under Infectious Diseases, select ID physician on call for either NRGH, RJH, or VGH Infectious Diseases. If there is no doctor listed for NRGH, please call the RJH contact covering.

### **Online COVID Resources:**

[COVID-19 Main Page](#)

[Medication Related Guidance and Recommendations](#)