

## **THALIDOMIDE; *information for patients***

Your specialist has prescribed you thalidomide tablets for your condition. *Please read this information sheet.* If you have any questions, particularly about the treatment or potential side-effects, please ask Professor.

- Thalidomide was originally used in the 1950s as a sedative but withdrawn in 1961 because of birth defects when given to pregnant women.
- Since then it has been found to benefit several severe conditions unresponsive to other treatments.
- This is why you have been prescribed the drug.

## ***IT IS IMPORTANT NEVER TO SHARE OR GIVE THIS DRUG TO OTHERS***

### *Pregnancy*

- Patients given thalidomide must not get pregnant.
- If you could possibly be pregnant, you will need a pregnancy test to check this is negative before you start thalidomide treatment.
- *You must take effective contraceptive measures while you are taking thalidomide, and for 3 months after you have finished the tablets.* After this time there is no risk to your baby should you then become pregnant.
- If you think you may become pregnant during your treatment you should not take thalidomide.
- If you miss a menstrual period while you are taking the drug, you must stop taking it immediately and inform Professor.

### *Nerve damage*

- Nerve damage can occur during thalidomide treatment.
- You will need nerve conduction tests before the start of your treatment, and these should be repeated after you have taken 10 g of the drug or every 6 months, whichever comes first.
- If you experience any tingling, pins and needles or numbness in your arms, legs, hands or feet while taking thalidomide, you should stop taking it and contact Professor.
- Nerve damage will recover on stopping the treatment in approximately 50% of cases, but in others may be permanent.

### *Drowsiness*

- Thalidomide makes most people feel drowsy. It should be taken at night.
- Drowsiness persisting during the day makes it unsafe for you to drive or operate machinery and may impair alertness and ability to think clearly.
- Alcohol must be avoided

#### *Other side-effects*

May include nausea, vomiting, constipation, giddiness, headaches, fever, skin rashes, mood changes, dry mouth, increased appetite, low white blood cell count, changes in blood sugar levels, thyroid problems and slow heart beat.

*Modified from British Journal of Dermatology, 2002; 144. 310- 3 15 and [www.fda.gov/cder/news/thalidomide.html](http://www.fda.gov/cder/news/thalidomide.html)*

*A patient has the right under common law to give or withhold consent to medical examination of treatment. This is one of the basic principles of health care. Patients are entitled to receive sufficient information in a way they can understand about the proposed treatments, the possible alternatives and any substantial risk or risks which may be special in kind or magnitude or special to the patient, so that they can make a balanced judgement. (UK Health Dept. 19.2.99. HSC 1999/031)*

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