



## Understanding Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis

# Anti-fibrotic Treatments for Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis

Pirfenidone and nintedanib are anti-fibrotic medications that may help reduce the rate of scarring in your lungs if you have been diagnosed with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF). Although IPF is not currently curable, these medications may help preserve your lung function and slow the progression of IPF.

### How does your treating doctor decide whether anti-fibrotics are right for you?

Choosing the right anti-fibrotic medication is important and depends on various factors such as your lifestyle and other medical conditions. It is important to discuss your options with your specialist doctor who will help choose a medication that suits you.

### What are the common side effects of anti-fibrotic medications?

Like most medications, anti-fibrotics may cause some side effects, although most people will not experience them. Both pirfenidone and nintedanib may cause nausea, loss of appetite, weight loss and irregularities with your liver function. Pirfenidone may also cause a skin rash if you are exposed to sunlight, while nintedanib can cause diarrhoea. While you are taking these anti-fibrotic medications, your specialist doctor will organise regular blood tests to closely monitor your full blood count and liver function. Although most side effects are mild, it is important you discuss them with your treating doctor and develop a management plan that can be followed if side effects develop.

### How should you take your anti-fibrotic medications?

Your specialist doctor will tell you how many tablets to take and how frequently to take them. It is important to follow their instructions carefully.

**Generally, to reduce the risk of side effects:**



**Swallow your  
tablets whole with a  
full glass of water**



**Take your tablets  
with a full meal**

If you are prescribed pirfenidone and are taking multiple tablets at one time, you can separate them out over your meal (one tablet at the beginning, one in the middle and one at the end of the meal). If you miss a dose, it is safer to leave it out and not double your dose.

## Tips and tricks for managing side effects

If you develop side effects whilst taking the medications, it is important you follow the management plan that you developed with your specialist doctor when you first started the medication.

**There are also some other simple strategies and preventative steps that you can use to help manage side effects.**



### If you develop a skin rash when you are exposed to sunlight:

- It is important to consider preventative steps to reduce your risk:
  - Wear a broad-brimmed hat and long-sleeve shirts.
  - Use sunscreen (SPF50+ or higher) daily.



### If you develop diarrhoea or unusually frequent or runny stools

- Try eating low-fibre food and smaller but more-frequent meals.
- Avoid fatty or spicy foods and raw vegetables or nuts.
- Make sure you stay hydrated by drinking water or hydrating fluids.
- Your specialist doctor may also prescribe some medications such as an anti-nausea and anti-diarrhoea medication.
  - It is important to take the medication exactly the way your specialist doctor has told you to.

These are just some examples, talk to your treating doctor or healthcare team for more information.

## Where can you get more help with managing side effects?

There are patient information pamphlets for both pirfenidone and nintedanib that have useful information on how to take the medications and manage potential side effects. You can also find other patient resources on the internet, such as the Lung Foundation Australia website, including peer support options.

If you have any questions about anti-fibrotic medication or experience side effects, it's important to discuss them with your specialist doctor or healthcare team so you can develop the best individualised management plan for you.



## FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Contact Lung Foundation Australia for more information, to access our support services and join our mailing list for regular updates and latest news.

### Lung Foundation Australia Services

- Information and Support Team
- Lung disease information resources
- Education webinars
- Lung Cancer and Respiratory Support Nurses
- Support groups
- Peer-to-peer connections
- Referral to pulmonary rehabilitation and Lungs in Action exercise programs
- Inspired Living Newsletter

### External Links

- Centre of Research Excellence in Pulmonary Fibrosis [www.cre-pf.org.au](http://www.cre-pf.org.au)
- Pulmonary Fibrosis Australasian Clinical Trials Network [www.pact.lungfoundation.com.au](http://www.pact.lungfoundation.com.au)
- Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation [www.pulmonaryfibrosis.org](http://www.pulmonaryfibrosis.org)
- Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation [www.cpff.ca](http://www.cpff.ca)

[Lungfoundation.com.au](http://Lungfoundation.com.au) | Freecall 1800 654 301 | [enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au](mailto:enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au)

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Centre of Research Excellence in  
Pulmonary Fibrosis



Sydney  
Local Health District