



## Understanding Pulmonary Fibrosis

# Anti-fibrotic Treatments for 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) or another type of progressive Pulmonary Fibrosis (PF). Although PF is not currently curable, these medications may help preserve your lung function and slow the progression of PF.

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

Anti-fibrotic medications are approved for people living with mild, moderate and severe IPF or progressive PF. Choosing the right anti-fibrotic medication is important and depends on various factors such as your lifestyle, lung function and other medical conditions. It is important to discuss your options with your specialist doctor who will help you choose the medication that best suits your situation.

### 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 may cause diarrhoea. While you are taking these anti-fibrotic medications, your specialist doctor will organise regular blood tests to closely monitor your 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 your 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, but you **should not** double your dose.

## Managing side effects

Before starting on these medications, it is important to develop a management plan with your specialist doctor, General Practitioner (GP) or healthcare team, for you to follow if you were to develop side effects. If possible, try to keep a copy of your management plan so that you can readily refer to it when needed.

### Other strategies and preventative steps that you can use to help manage side effects:



If you develop diarrhoea or unusually frequent or runny stools

- Try eating low-fibre food (e.g. chicken, fish, eggs, puddings, mashed potatoes, rice, yogurt, cottage cheese)
- Have 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 doctor may also prescribe some medicines such as an anti-nausea and anti-diarrhoea medication
  - It is important to take these medications exactly the way your doctor has told you to.



To reduce the risk of developing a skin rash when you are exposed to sunlight

- Wear a broad-brimmed hat and long-sleeve shirts
- Use sunscreen (SPF50+ or higher) daily.

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

You can also find other resources and peer support options through the Lung Foundation Australia website.

Read more about anti-fibrotic treatments:

- **Pirfenidone**  
[lungfoundation.com.au/resources/pirfenidone/](https://lungfoundation.com.au/resources/pirfenidone/)
- **Nintedanib**  
[lungfoundation.com.au/resources/nintedanib/](https://lungfoundation.com.au/resources/nintedanib/)

**If you have any questions about anti-fibrotic medications or experience side effects, it is important to discuss them with your specialist doctor, GP 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
- Support groups
- Peer-to-peer connections

### External Links

- Centre of Research Excellence in Pulmonary Fibrosis: [cre-pf.org.au](https://cre-pf.org.au)
- Pulmonary Fibrosis Australasian Clinical Trials Network (PACT): [pactnetwork.com.au](https://pactnetwork.com.au)
- Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation: [pulmonaryfibrosis.org](https://pulmonaryfibrosis.org)

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