



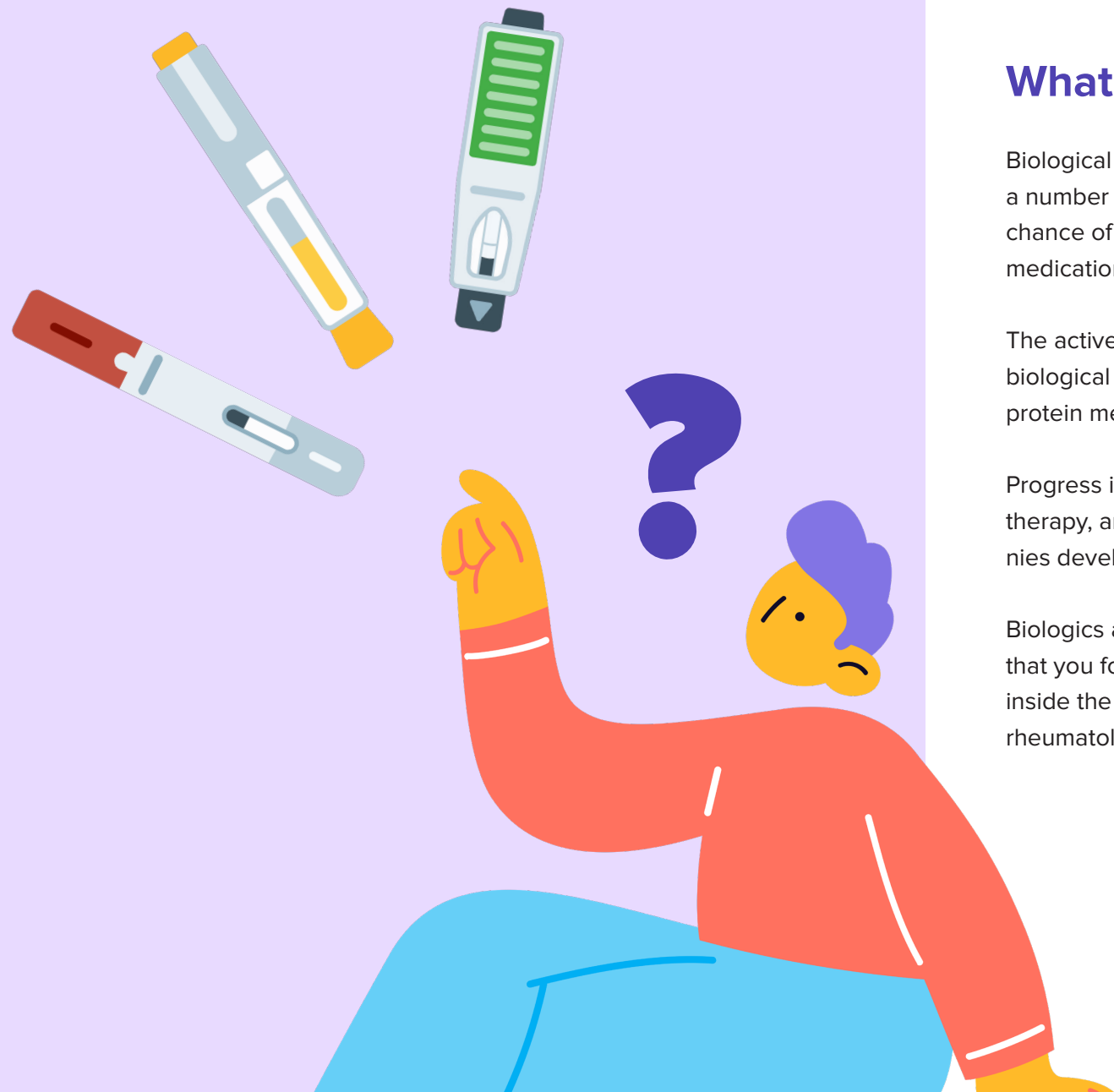
## Biologics — Knowledge and Everyday Life

Tips and advice about biologics for you if you are being treated, or are about to start treatment, with a biological medication.



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## What are biologics?

Biological medicines have become increasingly important for treating a number of diseases. For you as a patient, biologics provide a better chance of getting treatment for diseases that previously lacked effective medication.

The active substance in biologics is produced in, or extracted from, a biological source of living cells. Biological medicines are often so-called protein medicines.

Progress is fast and new types of biologics, such as stem cells and gene therapy, are on their way to be used in healthcare. In addition, companies develop copies of the original biologics, so-called biosimilars.

Biologics are more sensitive than traditional medicines. It is important that you follow the storage instructions you find on the leaflet included inside the packaging. You can also ask at the pharmacy or talk to your rheumatology clinic if you need help.



## Starting an injection treatment

### Preparing for the visit

For the first injection, patients often visit the clinic and get instructions and help to get started.

Before the visit, go through the information you have received and write down your questions before going to the clinic. Feel free to watch an instructional video online. Pharmaceutical companies often make their own instructional films for their products.

Some patients bring along a relative as a pair of extra ears and eyes to take part in the instructions given.

*“Something I’ve appreciated a lot is that when starting a new treatment I get to meet a nurse and try out how to take the injection. It made me feel less nervous the first time at home.*”

*Information leaflets feel very dramatic sometimes, so it’s good to know that I can call my clinic and ask when questions come up.”*

## Collecting and Storing Biologics

For injectable medication, you can pick it up from the pharmacy or your clinic, depending on your country's practices. Availability of prescribed medications over the counter can differ, so it's advisable to call in advance to confirm that your medication is available. In some countries, you can place an order through an online pharmacy and collect it at a pharmacy of your choice.

### The transport home

When you collect your biological medication and transport it home, it is important to remember their sensitivity to both heat and cold. A protective bag or alternatively a cool bag is needed depending on the outdoor temperature.

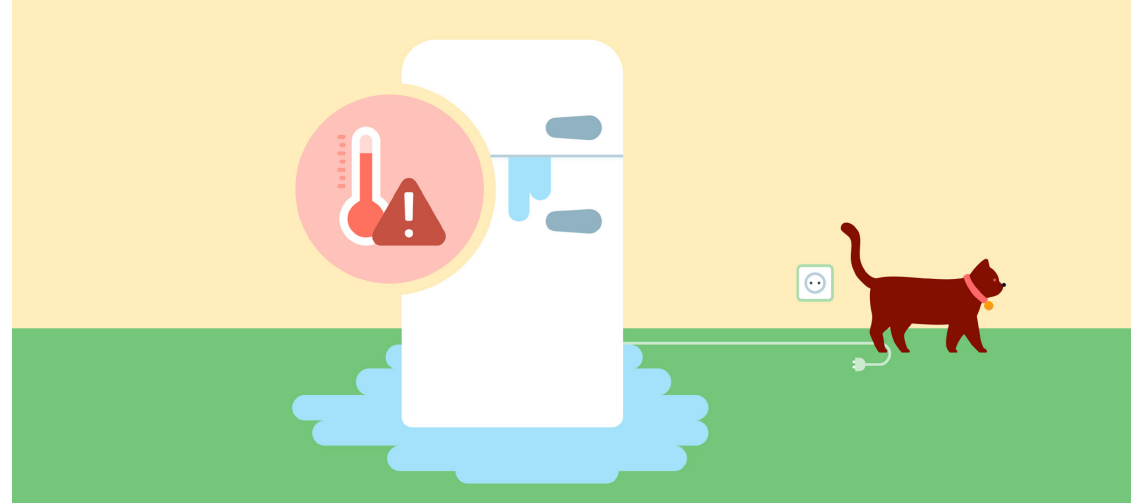
Never leave your biological medication unprotected in a car. The medicine must not freeze or exceed +25 C.

### Storage at home

When you get home, you should store the medication in a safe way. Biologics should be stored between +2 to a maximum of 8 °C. Store the medication in its original packaging, partly because they are sensitive to light but also since the packaging has been designed to protect the biological medication and maintain their effect.

### Storage in the fridge

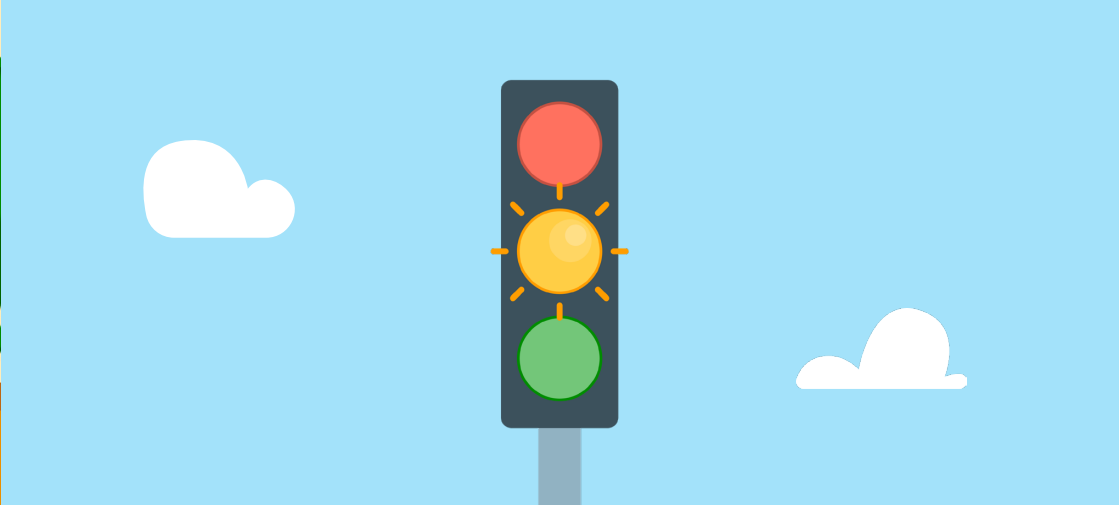
When storing medication in the fridge, remember that it must not freeze. Keep it away from the cooling elements at the back of the fridge, and do not place it too close to the freezer compartment or similar areas. The shelves in the fridge door are also warmer than the rest of the fridge, so it might be wise not to store medication there either.



### If an accident occurs

Accidents happen. If, for example, someone forgot to close the fridge door and the fridge fails to maintain the cold temperature, there are a few things that you should consider:

- Some biologics can tolerate up to several days or weeks at room temperature. It is important to check your specific biological medicine, as the tolerance can vary significantly between different biologics.
- Biologics that have been stored at room temperature must be used within the time that applies to your biological medicine. Its shelf life cannot be extended by cooling it again.
- If you are not able to use the biological medicine within the safe period after storage at room temperature, contact your rheumatology clinic and get advice on how to proceed.



## Taking Your Injection

Here is a brief guide with considerations when preparing to take your injectable medication:

### When you are about to take your injection

- Remove your injection from the fridge about 30 minutes before injecting so it can get to room temperature.
- Avoid placing the injection directly in sunlight, but a short exposure to the light in the room is not a problem.
- Make sure you have everything you need. It could be antiseptic wipes, plasters, and a return container for used injections.

### When you take the injection

Sit comfortably and follow the instructions for your medication. Read in advance to understand how to inject it. If you have a so-called injection pen, it usually clicks when it's done. Then you just wait a few seconds more and remove the pen.

The pen or injection should be disposed of safely, follow your community guidelines for disposing of the waste container.



## Reasons to pause treatment with biologics

On some occasions you might need to pause your treatment. It is important that you consult with your clinic if you have questions.

If you are ill. You should avoid taking the injection if you feel ill. That is, if you have a fever, flu, or a severe cold. Contact your clinic and ask what to do if you feel unsure.

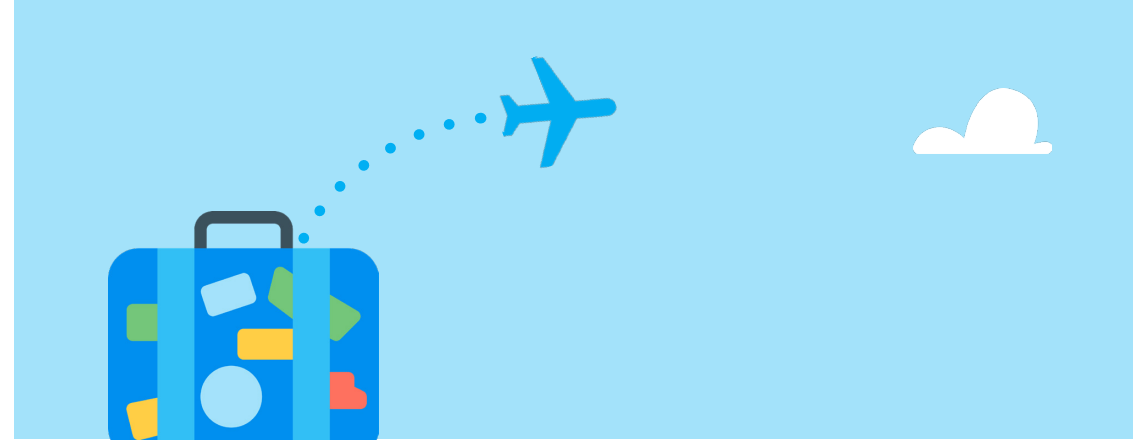
Planned operation. If you are going to have a planned operation of any kind, you may need to pause your treatment. Notify the rheumatology clinic well in advance of the procedure so that you know what applies to you.

During other temporary treatments. If you have a serious infection and are on, for example, antibiotics, you may need to pause your biologics. You can always call the rheumatology clinic and consult with them if you feel unsure.

Pregnancy. Today there are biologics that you can take both before and during pregnancy. Talk to your rheumatologist about your specific medication.

*“You get to choose between stomach or thigh. If, for example, you just want to inject in the thigh, then you switch thigh every other time and also side on the thigh itself, or if just the stomach, you vary the injection site. Some circulate between the stomach and thighs, it is a matter of taste what feels most comfortable and our bodies do look different.”*

Specialist nurse, rheumatology



## Traveling with Biologics

If you're planning to travel, there are a few things to think about to make your journey as smooth as possible.

### Preparation is Key

Depending on which medicines you're taking with you, and how or where you're going to travel, determines what you need to prepare in advance.

Make sure to collect medicines well in advance in the amount needed for the trip. When you pack, count the medication and days one more time, so you know for sure you bring the right amount with you. Bring a little extra as a reserve, in case of any delays or other unexpected or spontaneous changes should occur.

### Cold Storage

If the medication needs to be stored cold during the trip, make sure you have a cool bag suitable for the purpose. Pharmaceutical companies often have such bags specially designed for their products. Never place the injections directly on the ice pack if you are traveling with a cool bag.



## Prescriptions and Certificates

Depending on how you're going to travel, you may need to prove that the medicine you have with you is for your personal medical use. You prove this by presenting a prescription, pharmacy label, or medical certificate.

A certificate for your medicine can be issued by your rheumatology clinic. Be sure to ask for it well in advance of your trip.

## You Can Bring What You Need

Prescription and over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies in liquid form may be carried without limitation in hand luggage, i.e. you can bring what you need for the trip and your absence. This also applies to ice packs or the equivalent when the medicine requires this

## Pack Your Medicine in your Hand Luggage

If you're getting on a plane, always pack your medicine in the hand luggage that you bring with you onboard. Checked-in luggage can be handled roughly, be lost or delayed. The temperature in the airplane's cargo hold also gets too cold, so that is another reason to pack your medicines in your hand luggage.

Make sure you have your prescription, a pharmacy label, and/or medical certificate to show when you go through security.

In the security control, you need to place the cool bag with your medicines separately from your hand luggage.

It may facilitate handling in the security control if the medicine is carried in the original packaging, but this is not a requirement.

## The Rules Can Be Different

The rules for traveling with different types of medicines can differ between countries. For example, the amount of medicine that you may bring with you can be different. The requirements for certificates can also differ.

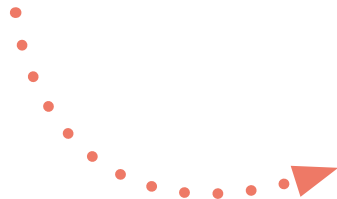
Many countries have special rules for medicines classified as narcotics which can include certain types of painkillers or sleeping pills. Therefore, it's important to check the rules of the destination and airline.



## Tips along the way

Managing your medication hands-on is one thing, but there are other aspects to regularly taking medication as injections. Managing your medication hands-on is one thing, but there are other aspects to regularly taking medication as injections.

On the next page we have gathered some guiding advice.



### Your Medication Helps You

Your biological medication helps you by slowing down the process that otherwise breaks down and destroys the body.

Your biological medication is well tested and studied. It has helped many patients.

### Plan the Moment

Carefully choose the moment when to take your medication. If you tend to be stressed Monday morning, maybe Sunday is better? Combine it with an extra delicious breakfast or something else that you can look forward to.

An injection is less uncomfortable if it is not cold. Leave it out at room temperature for at least half an hour before you inject.

### Practice Relaxation

If you tense up it causes unnecessary pain. Do something that makes you relax. Listen to music you like or distract yourself by talking to someone at the same time as you take the injection.

### Speak up if it doesn't feel good

If you find it very difficult and you worry before the injections, tell your doctor or nurse! Most likely you can find a working strategy together.

You should not have to end up in a situation where you skip or postpone medication due to worry or discomfort.



# Want to learn more?

- European Medicines Agency (EMA) website  
(search for: *Biosimilar medicine*)
- Centers for disease control and prevention (CDC)  
(search for: *Traveling Abroad with Medicine*)

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