

What is combination DMARD therapy?

This leaflet is a guide to help you understand the current treatments for early rheumatoid arthritis.

Two or more of these drugs are used together (combination therapy) to reduce pain, swelling and stiffness in your joints.

Combination therapy has been shown to produce the best long term outcome for rheumatoid arthritis.




The four drugs commonly used are Methotrexate, Hydroxychloroquine, Sulfasalazine and Leflunomide.

Your starting dose regime and combination will be decided by your doctor. During the early stages of treatment, most patients will also need corticosteroids by injection into muscle or joints or by tablets.

For more information please visit:
www.arthritisresearchuk.org
<http://www.patient.co.uk/health/rheumatoid-arthritis-leaflet>

Hydroxychloroquine

This is a **daily** medication.



	Morning	Evening
Week 1 to 6	 Hydroxychloroquine 200mg (one tablet)	 Hydroxychloroquine 200mg (one tablet)
Week 7 onwards	 Hydroxychloroquine 200mg (one tablet)	
Continue on Hydroxychloroquine 200mg until your next appointment.		

It may take 3-4 months before you feel better

Please ensure you have an eye test annually with your optician.

Methotrexate

This is a **once-a-week** medication

	Methotrexate	Folic acid
	Day <input type="text"/>	Day <input type="text"/> NOT same day as Methotrexate
Weekly	 Methotrexate 15 mg (6 tablets)	 Folic acid 10 mg (2 tablets)
Continue Methotrexate 15mg and Folic Acid 10mg until your next appointment. Make sure you have a blood test during week 4		

It may take 3-4 months before you feel better











You will need a blood test every month

The dose may need to be increased during your clinic visits.

We only use the 2.5mg tablets to avoid confusion and allow flexibility in treatment dosage

Sulphasalazine

This is a **daily** medication

	Morning (with food)	Evening (with food)
Week 1	 Sulphasalazine EN 500mg (one tablet)	
Week 2	 Sulphasalazine EN 500mg (one tablet)	 Sulphasalazine EN 500mg (one tablet)
Week 3	  Sulphasalazine EN 1000mg (two tablets)	 Sulphasalazine EN 500mg (one tablet)
Week 4 Onwards	  Sulphasalazine EN 1000mg (two tablets)	  Sulphasalazine EN 1000mg (two tablets)

Continue on **two** Sulphasalazine EN tablets twice a day until your next appointment. Make sure you have a blood test during week 4.


It may take 3-4 months before you feel better

You will need a blood test every month

Please make sure that you are prescribed the
"EN" tablets

Leflunomide

This is a **daily** medication.

Daily	
Continue on Leflunomide 20mg until your next appointment. Make sure you have a blood test during week 4	

It may take 4-6 weeks before you start to feel better

You will need a blood test and blood pressure check every month

You may notice loose motions with this tablet. This often settles within a couple of weeks

Authors: Dr Amy Hetherington, Dr Lynn Williamson, Rheumatology Department

Patient Information

Combined Disease Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drugs for Early Rheumatoid Arthritis

Helpline Number
01793 604323

Rheumatology Department
Great Western Hospital Swindon

For your next prescription contact:
The DAWN Prescription line:
01793 604204 or your GP.

If you would like this information in another format, i.e. large print or another language, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) department on 01793 604031