

# Treatments for MS:

## TECFIDERA<sup>®</sup> (dimethyl fumarate)

**There are currently nine disease-modifying therapies approved for people with MS in Australia. These therapies, called immunotherapies, work to reduce disease activity in the central nervous system and reduce the frequency and severity of relapses in people with MS.**

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### What is Tecfidera and how does it work with MS?

Tecfidera (dimethyl fumarate) - previously known as BG-12 - is an oral treatment for Australian patients with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (MS).

Tecfidera has been shown to have anti-inflammatory and neuro-protective properties.

It is thought that Tecfidera works in MS by inhibiting immune cells and molecules, and may have anti-oxidant properties that protect the brain and spinal cord from damage.<sup>i</sup> Clinical trials have shown it can reduce relapse rates and delay the progression of disability in people with relapsing remitting MS.

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### How is Tecfidera administered?

Tecfidera is taken as an oral capsule. The recommended starting dose of Tecfidera is 120mg, twice daily. After 7 days the dose may be increased to the recommended dose of 240mg twice daily. Tecfidera can be taken with

or without food. For patients who experience gastrointestinal side-effects or flushing, taking the capsules with food may reduce these side-effects.

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### What are the possible side effects of Tecfidera?

In clinical trials of Tecfidera, the most common side-effects experienced were flushing, diarrhea, nausea and abdominal pain. Less common but more serious side-effects include more severe gastrointestinal side-effects, effects on the kidneys and liver, and reduced white blood cell counts. While increased

frequencies of infection were not seen in clinical trials, it is recommended that patients on Tecfidera have their white blood cell counts monitored at least annually. Tecfidera has not been tested in people under the age of 18 or in women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Women who are pregnant, planning pregnancy or breastfeeding should seek advice from their doctor.

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### How can I access Tecfidera?

Tecfidera has been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and was recently added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. It will be available for purchase from December 1, 2013. Please consult your neurologist to see if Tecfidera is the right treatment for you.

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### For more information on MS and other MS treatments:

- Speak to your neurologist about what treatment best suits your individual circumstances.
- For information about MS, MS treatments and to find contact details for your state MS organisation visit [www.msaustralia.org.au](http://www.msaustralia.org.au).
- MS Nurses at you state MS organisation can also provide information, training and ongoing support in managing your immunotherapy. Contact your state office for more information.
- MS Research Australia (MSRA) provides information on the latest research and clinical trials at [www.msra.org.au](http://www.msra.org.au)

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**Please note:** MS Australia does not recommend any specific disease-modifying treatment for people living with MS. Decisions about any treatments, taking into consideration the potential benefits and side effects, should be made in careful consultation with the person's neurologist.

### References:

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- <sup>i</sup> Scannevin RH, et al. Fumarates promote cytoprotection of central nervous system cells against oxidative stress via the nuclear factor (erythroid-derived 2)-like 2 pathway. *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics* 2012;341:274-84.