ANTI-CALCITONIN GENE-RELATED PEPTIDE (CGRP) MEDICATIONS FOR MIGRAINE

Reviewed by
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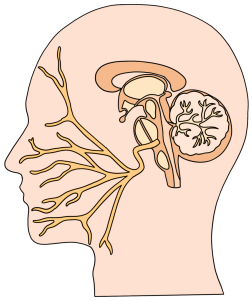
Anti-calcitonin gene-related peptide (CGRP) medications have been developed specifically for migraine.

There are two main types of medicines that target CGRP: **CGRP monoclonal antibodies** and **gepants**. Both types are known as anti-CGRP medications.

Anti-CGRP medications can reduce how often migraine attacks happen and how severe they are. They are used for both episodic and chronic migraine.

CGRP monoclonal antibodies

CGRP monoclonal antibodies are developed specifically to prevent migraine attacks. The CGRP monoclonal antibodies block the CGRP protein, by either attaching to CGRP itself or attaching to the receptor sites found in some parts of the nervous system such as the trigeminal nerve. The trigeminal nerve is a large nerve in your head involved in migraine.

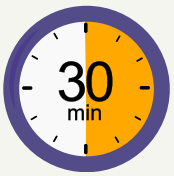


Three CGRP monoclonal antibody medications are available in New Zealand:

- **Erenumab (Aimovig)**
- **Fremanezumab (Ajovy)**
- **Galcanezumab (Emgality)**



Aimovig, Ajovy and Emgality are given as a subcutaneous (an injection just under your skin) self-injection, usually into your abdomen, thigh or buttock. Aimovig, Ajovy and Emgality must be stored in the fridge.



It's recommended to take the injection out of the fridge for at least 30 minutes before using. This helps it reach room temperature and can minimise injection site pain.

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Gepants



Gepants are another class of medication that targets calcitonin gene-related peptide (CGRP). Atogepant (Aquipta) is the only gepant available in New Zealand.



Aquipta is a once daily oral tablet taken for **prevention** of episodic and chronic migraine.

In some countries, atogepant is approved for acute use, to treat a migraine attack.

Side effects

Anti-CGRP medicines are generally well tolerated, but side effects can occur.
For monoclonal antibodies (Aimovig, Ajovy, Emgality) the most common side effects are reactions where the medicine is injected. Constipation has also been reported with Aimovig.

Possible side effects of gepants (Aquipta) include:

- nausea
- constipation
- tiredness.



These medicines are still relatively new, and research into their long-term safety is continuing.

Gepants can interact with some medicines, so your doctor, nurse or pharmacist can check for possible interactions.

For medication safety information, including more potential side effects, please visit the Medsafe website (medsafe.govt.nz).

Pregnancy and breastfeeding



We don't yet know whether anti-CGRP medicines are safe during pregnancy or breastfeeding. Talk with your health professional if you are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding.

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Cost of anti-CGRP medications

None of the anti-CGRP medications available in New Zealand are funded. This means that you have to pay for them yourself.



Your GP or nurse practitioner can prescribe anti-CGRP medications. You don't need to see a neurologist to start these medications.

Erenumab (Aimovig)
Aimovig is available as a 70mg and 140mg dose. It's a subcutaneous injection given every four weeks. A 70mg injection costs $678 and 140mg costs $1,356. Aimovig is only available through Grafton Pharmacy in Auckland.

Fremanezumab (Ajovy)
Ajovy is a subcutaneous injection. It has two dosing options: either one injection (225mg) once a month, or three injections (675mg) every three months. Ajovy costs between $299–$330 per 225mg injection. Ajovy is available from pharmacies across New Zealand via wholesalers including CDC Pharmaceuticals and ProPharma, and individual pharmacies set their own retail prices.

Galcanezumab (Emgality)
Emgality is a subcutaneous injection. It's available as a 120mg injection. Two injections (240mg) are needed as a first, loading dose, and then one injection every four weeks. Emgality should be available through any chemist in New Zealand. The wholesaler is CDC Pharmaceuticals, but even pharmacies that don't usually purchase medicine from CDC can still get Emgality through them.

Atogepant (Aquipta)
Aquipta is available through any pharmacy, but the best price is only via a special access programme through Airport Oaks Pharmacy in Auckland and Avalon Medical Centre Pharmacy in Wellington. The access programme price is $352.80 for a 28 supply (28 x 60mg tablets). Aquipta can be couriered throughout New Zealand at approximately $6–$12 depending on the location.

For updates on costs, access and funding, check the Migraine Foundation website.

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Knowing if anti-CGRP medications are right for you

Anti-CGRP medications work well for many people, but not everyone. About 50% of people have their migraine days cut by half or more, some improve a little and around 1 in 4 people get little or no benefit.



If one anti-CGRP medication doesn't work well enough, another may still work so it's worth trialing more than one. It's recommended to try an anti-CGRP medication for 3–6 months to see if it will work for you.

The choice of which anti-CGRP medication to try may depend on:

- whether you prefer a tablet or injection
- how often you want to take treatment
- other medicines you take
- your individual circumstances.



Will the anti-CGRP medications be funded?

Aimovig, Ajovy, Emgality and Aquipta are listed on Pharmac's Options for Investment list. This is Pharmac's top priority funding list, which is the list of medications Pharmac would fund if it had the budget to do so. There's no timeframe for if and when anti-CGRP medications will be funded in New Zealand.

Other anti-CGRP medications available overseas

Some anti-CGRP medications are available overseas but not in New Zealand. These include:

CGRP monoclonal antibodies

- Eptinezumab (Vyepti)

Gepants

- Rimegepant (Nurtec ODT)
- Ubrogepant (Ubrelvy)
- Zavegepant (Zavzpret)

For more information about anti-CGRP medications for migraine please visit the Migraine Foundation Aotearoa New Zealand website (migrainefoundation.org.nz).

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