# Aducanumab (Aduhelm) FAQ

Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center

## *What is Aducanumab?*

Aducanumab, brand name Aduhelm, is a new drug for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease that was approved for commercial use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on June 7, 2021. The class of drug is a monoclonal antibody.

## *How does it work?*

Aducanumab is thought to remove clumps of protein in the brain called Amyloid-Beta, which forms the "plaques" in the brain in Alzheimer's disease. Researchers consider the buildup of Amyloid-Beta to be one of the causes of Alzheimer's disease.

## *How is it given?*

The drug is administered through an infusion (using an intravenous or "IV" pump), given once every four weeks, through a needle in a vein of the arm. At this time, the thought is that the drug would need to be given monthly for years, and possibly for the rest of your life. Routine MRI brain imaging may be needed for patients receiving this medication, to monitor for complications such as small bleeds in the brain.

## *What are the side effects?*

Side effect can include swelling and/or microbleeds in the brain, which may occur in about a third of people who receive this drug. Associated symptoms may also include headache, falls, or confusion. It is recommended to have repeated MRI scans to look for these complications and monitor for side effects while on therapy.

## *Will this drug cure Alzheimer's disease?*

Aducanumab is a treatment for Alzheimer's disease, but not a cure. While the drug has shown effectiveness in reducing the amount of amyloid plaque in the brain, the resultant impact on memory or thinking is not yet well known. In the clinical trials, there is some indication that this drug may help preserve functional ability compared to those who did not take the drug. In clinical trials, this drug only worked in some patients, so it is unclear who will benefit from this therapy.

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## *Who is eligible for this drug?*

The clinical trials for Aducanumab were done in volunteer individuals with either Mild Cognitive Impairment or mild dementia in persons with confirmed Alzheimer's disease pathology. The amyloid protein can be identified using PET scans or through analysis of the cerebral spinal fluid (CSF), when a sample is obtained via a procedure called a lumbar puncture, or spinal tap. Both PET scans and CSF analysis for amyloid protein detection are expensive and may not be covered by medical insurance.

Individuals with other forms of dementia or memory loss, as well as those with more advanced disease, may not benefit from the drug. Other medical conditions, medications or health concerns may limit your ability to take this drug. More information on eligibility is forthcoming.

## *Can I receive this drug at Rush?*

This medication is not yet available at Rush, but this may change in the future.

## *Is it covered by insurance?*

We do not yet know if insurance providers will cover this medication or the other medical tests needed to monitor the brain to ensure safety. The estimated cost of the drug alone is $56,000/year according to the drug manufacturer, Biogen.

## *I have more questions – who should I talk to?*

Your physician and/or dementia care provider can explain more about the pros and cons to this novel therapy.

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