

## A New Medication for Alzheimer's Disease

You may have been hearing in the news lately about the recent FDA approval of a new medication for Alzheimer's disease. This is potentially exciting news, given the lack of good treatment for this disease, but let's take a closer look and learn more about it.

The medication is Aducanumab (brand name Aduhelm), and it is a monoclonal antibody made in a lab to stick to the amyloid molecule that forms plaques in the brain in Alzheimer's disease. Once the antibody sticks to the plaque, the idea is that your body's immune system will recognize and remove it, leading to less brain cell damage and stopping the deterioration of the patient's thinking and memory.

In the clinical trials, this drug was used in patients with early stage Alzheimer's disease who have mild dementia, meaning they may still be able to function normally or only require a small amount of help with things like paying bills or preparing meals. Those with disease that has progressed beyond that would not be candidates for the drug. Dementia has a number of different causes, so you also need to make sure that the patient's dementia is due to Alzheimer's and not to another cause. To do that you would need an Amyloid PET scan or a lumbar puncture where they remove some of the fluid around the spinal cord to test it.

The drug is an IV infusion done every 4 weeks, potentially indefinitely. 30% of those who took the drug did have brain swelling and more than 10% had small bleeds in the brain, so these side effects need to be monitored closely by a specialist and MRI scans.

The cost of the drug is estimated at \$56,000 a year, not including cost of monitoring for side effects, so long term treatment will be very expensive. Given the large number of patients who would potentially meet the criteria for treatment, this cost to Medicare would be very significant.

There were 2 large clinical trials to see how useful this drug is. One of the studies **did** show benefit and slowed the decline of memory and function. The other study **did not** show benefit.

The benefit in the positive study was relatively small. Patients were assessed with 2 different measures. On the 30-point Mini-mental status exam, the high dose of the drug led to a 0.6 point improvement, and on the 85-point Alzheimer's Disease Assessment Cognitive Subscale-13 the high dose led to a 1.4 point improvement. It is hard to predict if these improvements would lead to noticeable improvement in symptoms in any one patient, and the odds of dramatic improvement for any given patient who takes this drug are low.

The FDA granted the drug accelerated approval, which means the company that makes it (Biogen) will conduct an additional study to try to determine if it truly is beneficial or not. With this information, we may have better answers in the future, but this additional study will likely take 3-4 years.

If you or a loved one have mild dementia, discuss with your neurologist and primary care doctor to help determine if it might be the right choice to take this medication. Due to the nature of the treatment and the monitoring needed, this medication will be given by a specialist (neurologist or memory clinic).

Hopefully this medication and other new treatments down the road will offer benefit for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. In the meantime, remember that controlling blood pressure, regular aerobic exercise, a Mediterranean diet, social activity and memory exercises are helpful for prevention and slowing decline in dementia as well.

### Administrative update:

NTPHP is excited to announce the addition of two new physicians, who have both been actively practicing in Dallas for many years. Please join us in welcoming Manik Aggarwal, MD to our Dallas office and Kyle Gummelt, DO to our Park Cities office. Both are accepting new patients and additional information can be found within their bios on [www.ntphp.com](http://www.ntphp.com). Welcome to Dr. Aggarwal and Dr. Gummelt!

# North Texas Preferred Health Partners Locations

Dallas Office  
3417 Gaston Avenue  
Suite 700  
Dallas, Texas 75246  
214-823-4800

Plano Office  
4708 Dexter Drive  
Suite 400  
Plano, Texas 75093  
972-993-5050

Park Cities Office  
8215 Westchester Drive  
Suite 320  
Dallas, Texas 75225  
972-993-5040

Las Colinas Office  
440 West I-635  
Suite 405  
Irving, Texas 75063  
972-993-5080

Frisco Office  
3535 Victory Group Way  
Suite 330  
Frisco, Texas 75034  
972-993-5070

## HEALTHY HABITS

### Roasted Salmon with Artichoke Hearts and Lemon-Dill Yogurt Sauce

Adapted from: Joy Bauer

Makes 4 servings

#### Roasted Artichoke Hearts and Leaks

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp Olive Oil
- 2 Tbsp Lemon Juice
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp ground pepper
- 2 14 oz cans quartered artichoke hearts, drained and rinsed
- 2 leeks, cleaned and sliced thin

Directions

Preheat the oven to 425lbs.

In a mixing bowl combine oil, lemon juice, garlic, salt and pepper. Then add the artichokes and leeks to the bowl and mix to coat evenly.

On a baking sheet, spread out the mixture and roast for 20 minutes (or until vegetables are slightly browned and crispy)

#### Roasted Salmon

Ingredients

- 4 salmon filets
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp ground pepper

Directions

While vegetables are baking, lay salmon skin side down on an oiled baking sheet. Then lightly coat the salmon with olive oil, salt and pepper.

Roast in oven with vegetables for 12-15 minutes.

#### Lemon Dill Yogurt Sauce

Ingredients

- 1 cup 2-4% plain Greek yogurt
- 1 Tbsp dill, finely chopped
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

In a small bowl, mix all ingredient together. Once salmon and vegetables are cooked, top salmon with sauce and enjoy!

*Recommendations for sides: 1 slice of Sourdough bread, 1/2 cup Quinoa or 1/2 cup Lentil Pasta*