

Watch out for Fournier's gangrene (infection) when taking SGLT-2 inhibitors like empagliflozin

This information sheet provides information about a serious infection called Fournier's gangrene, which can happen in people taking sodium-glucose co-transporter 2 (SGLT-2) inhibitors. This information sheet is not a substitute for talking with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

SGLT-2 inhibitors help treat diabetes and some kidney and heart problems. These medicines lower blood sugar (glucose), help the kidneys work better and reduce your risk of a heart attack or stroke.

Empagliflozin is the funded SGLT-2 inhibitor in New Zealand. It is also called **Jardiance** or **Jardiamet** (with metformin).

What is Fournier's gangrene?

Fournier's gangrene is a serious bacterial infection around your vagina, penis, testicles or bottom. It is very rare but needs urgent treatment from a doctor.

The infection is also known as a 'flesh-eating disease' and can get worse quickly if not treated.

What can I do to prevent Fournier's gangrene?

Keep clean. It's important to wash your genitals with soap and warm water and then thoroughly dry yourself.

- If you are a woman, wash your vagina and bottom at least twice a day.
- If you are a man, wash your penis, testicles and bottom at least once a day.

Check the area regularly and if you notice anything unusual, contact your doctor or nurse immediately.

If you have diabetes, follow your doctors instructions to keep your blood glucose levels stable.

Contact your doctor or nurse immediately if you experience any of these symptoms:

- swelling, pain, itching or tenderness in or around your vagina, penis, testicles or bottom
- changes to the colour of your skin, such as redness or darkened areas around your vagina, penis, testicles or bottom
- fever or high temperature
- general unwellness or tiredness.

Fournier's gangrene is life-threatening, and you must seek treatment immediately. The infection can get worse quickly.

Your doctor or nurse will know what to do next.

How might Fournier's gangrene happen?

SGLT-2 inhibitors work by removing extra glucose through your pee (urine).

Because there is more glucose in your urine, you may get infections more easily like bladder infections (urinary tract infections).

You may also get an infection in or around your vagina, penis, testicles or bottom. If the infection is not treated, it could turn into Fournier's gangrene.

Fournier's gangrene has happened in people taking empagliflozin in New Zealand.

Where can I find more information?

Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist, or call Healthline free at any time on 0800 611 116.

See the following web pages.

- Consumer medicine information for medicines:
medsafe.govt.nz/Medicines/infoSearch.asp
- Health Navigator information about medicines:
healthnavigator.org.nz/medicines/

- DermNet NZ – Fournier’s gangrene:
dermnetnz.org/topics/fournier-gangrene
- DermNet NZ – Necrotising fasciitis (‘flesh-eating disease’):
dermnetnz.org/topics/necrotising-fasciitis

Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist can also provide healthy lifestyle advice about:

- helping you to lose weight
- helping you to quit smoking