

Medication Information Sheet**darbepoetin** (dar-be-POE-e-tin)

This document provides general information about your medication. It does not replace the advice of your health care professional. Always discuss your therapy with your health care professional and refer to the package insert for more details.

Other Name: Aranesp®

Appearance: Clear, colourless solution in pre-filled syringes

What is this medication for?

- Darbepoetin is a medication used to treat severe anemia (a low red blood cell count) caused by chemotherapy. It helps your bone marrow to make red blood cells.
- The preferred treatment for severe anemia is a blood transfusion, if this is appropriate for you.
- If you are not able to get a blood transfusion then your health care team will talk to you about treating your anemia with darbepoetin instead.
- Taking darbepoetin does have some risks. Studies have shown that some people who take darbepoetin have had shorter survival times than those who do not. Please discuss the risks and benefits with your doctor before using darbepoetin.

What should I do before I have this medication?

- Tell your doctor and your pharmacist if you have/had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have / had:
 - ◊ uncontrolled high blood pressure
 - ◊ heart problems
 - ◊ blood clots
 - ◊ seizures
 - ◊ any allergies
- Patients with cancer have a higher risk of getting blood clots. Some cancer treatments may increase this risk. Discuss this with your health care team.

How will this medication affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?

- Some studies done with animals suggest that this medication may harm the baby if used by pregnant women. No effects have yet been seen in humans but it is important to use caution. Talk to your health care team to figure out the best birth control method(s) for you and/or your partner.

- Let your health care team know if you or your partner is pregnant, becomes pregnant during treatment, or if you are breastfeeding.
- Do not breastfeed while using this drug.
- This medication may affect fertility (ability to get pregnant).

How is this medication given?

- This drug is given by injection under the skin in the upper arms, thighs or belly.
- Your doctor or nurse may teach you how to give the injection yourself at home. Follow these instructions carefully.
- If you are preparing and injecting the drug yourself, be sure you understand the instructions from your health care team.
- Do not shake the drug solution since this may damage the drug. Bubbling and foaming make it difficult to draw up a full dose.

What else do I need to know while on this medication?

- Make sure your health care team knows about all your medications (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals and supplements). Check with your health care team before starting or stopping any of them.
- Your doctor may advise you to also take iron supplements to help make red blood cells. Do not take an iron supplement without first speaking to your doctor.

How should I safely store this medication?

- Keep in the refrigerator, but do not freeze. Keep out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- Do not throw out any unused medications at home. Bring them to your pharmacy to be thrown away safely.
- Never reuse needles. Proper disposal of needle covers, needles and syringes is very important. They must always be disposed of in a puncture-proof container. Ask your pharmacist for help to properly dispose of these items, including the filled container.
- Do not use darbepoetin solutions that have been at room temperature (not above 25°C) for more than 24 hours.

What are the side effects of this medication?

You may not have all of the side effects below. You may have side effects that are not listed.

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
<p>Fatigue (tiredness)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be active and aim to get 30 minutes of moderate exercise (you are able to talk comfortably while exercising) on most days. Check with your health care team before starting any new exercise. • Pace yourself, do not rush. Put off less important activities. Rest when you need to. • Eat well and stay hydrated by drinking at least 6 to 8 glasses of water or other liquids every day (unless your doctor told you to drink more or less). • Avoid driving or using machinery if you are feeling tired <p>See our Fatigue pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
<p>Diarrhea</p> <p>May happen days to weeks after you get your treatment.</p> <p>If you have diarrhea :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take anti-diarrhea medication if your health care team prescribed it. • Avoid foods or drinks with artificial sweetener (e.g. chewing gum, “diet” drinks), coffee and alcohol. • Eat many small meals and snacks instead of 2 or 3 large meals. • Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day. Talk to your health care team if you can’t drink 6-8 cups of liquids each day when you have diarrhea. You may need special liquids with salt and sugar, called Oral Rehydration Therapy. <p>See the Diarrhea pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
<p>Mild swelling in arms and legs; puffiness</p> <p>To help prevent swelling :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat a low-salt diet. • Avoid tight fitting clothing. <p>If you have swelling in your legs, keep your feet up when sitting.</p>	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p>Dizziness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may feel light headed. • Lay down if this happens. • Get up and move slowly once you feel better. • Do not drive a motor vehicle or use machinery if you feel dizzy. 	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p>Headache; mild joint, muscle pain or cramps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your pain medication as prescribed by your doctor. • You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets as needed for mild aches and pains. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the right dose for you. • Talk to your doctor or pharmacist first before taking ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin. These medication may increase bleeding risk. • Rest often and try light exercise as it may help. 	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p>Fever (not related to infection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For mild fever, you may be asked to take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) as directed. 	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe

Other rare, but serious side effects are possible.

If you experience ANY of the following, speak to your cancer health care provider or get emergency medical help right away:

- Severe rash, skin blisters or peeling
- injection site swelling, itching
- Trouble breathing, have chest pain or cough up blood
- Confusion, trouble seeing, speaking, or using your arms and legs
- Severe headache, severe dizziness, or if you faint
- Swollen lips, face or tongue, chest and throat tightness
- Sudden and severe tiredness, shortness of breath during mild activity
- Seizures

For more links on how to manage your symptoms go to www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms.

The information set out in the medication information sheets, regimen information sheets, and symptom management information (for patients) contained in the Drug Formulary (the "Formulary") is intended to be used by health professionals and patients for informational purposes only. The information is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, drug interactions or side effects of a certain drug, nor should it be used to indicate that use of a particular drug is safe, appropriate or effective for a given condition.

A patient should always consult a healthcare provider if he/she has any questions regarding the information set out in the Formulary. The information in the Formulary is not intended to act as or replace medical advice and should not be relied upon in any such regard. All uses of the Formulary are subject to clinical judgment and actual prescribing patterns may not follow the information provided in the Formulary.