

Medication Information Sheet

interferon alfa-2b (in-ter-FEAR-on AL-fa)

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: Intron A®

Appearance: Multi-dose Pen, Ready-to-use Solution Vial, or Powder for reconstitution; ready to use and final solutions should be clear and colourless.

What it is used for

- For treating melanoma, some types of leukemia and lymphoma as well as some other cancers.

Before receiving it

- Tell your doctor if you have/had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have / had psychiatric or autoimmune problems, organ transplant, heart, liver or kidney problems, or infections, or if you have any allergies.
- People who have cancer or leukemia are at a higher risk of developing other cancers/leukemias (usually some years later) or blood clots. Some cancer medications may increase these risks, especially if used for a prolonged period of time. You should discuss any concerns about this drug with your doctor.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

- Do not use this drug if you are pregnant. If there is ANY chance that you or your partner may become pregnant, you and your partner together must: ► **Use 2 effective forms of birth control at the same time** while taking this drug: Keep using birth control until **6 months** after the last dose (general recommendation). Discuss with your healthcare team.
- Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant.
- Do not breastfeed while taking this drug.
- Effects on Fertility: Probable

How it is given

- If you are preparing and injecting the drug yourself, be sure you understand how to measure the **exact dose of Interferon Alfa** your doctor has prescribed as well as the proper method for preparing, injecting and disposing of the needle and syringe.
- Do not shake the vial. Bubbling and foaming make it difficult to draw up a full dose.
- **If you are using the multidose pen**, be sure you understand how to turn the exact number of clicks on the pen, in order to prime the pen to the dose which your doctor has prescribed.
- Inspect each vial or multidose pen of Interferon Alfa before using. It should be clear, colourless and there should be no particles in the liquid.

While receiving it

- This drug can interact with other drugs, and can result in the drugs not working as well or cause severe side effects.
- Make sure your doctor and pharmacist know about all your medicines (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals and supplements). Check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting or stopping any of them.

Safety / Storage

- Keep refrigerated, but do not freeze. Keep out of reach of children and pets.
- Do not throw out any unused drugs at home. Bring them to your pharmacy for safe disposal.
- **If you are using the multi-dose pen**, once a pen is opened and first used, it should not be used longer than 4 weeks. Also, if the pen is accidentally left at room temperature longer than 48 hours, it must be discarded.
- **If you are using the ready-to-use solution vial**, the 10 MU vial is stable for 7 days in the refrigerator after first use; the 18 and 25 MU vials are stable for 4 weeks in the refrigerator after first use.
- **If you are using the powder for reconstitution**, see your pharmacist for directions.
- For more details on storage, preparation, and administration of any of the dosage forms, refer to the patient information leaflet for interferon alfa.
- **Proper disposal of vials, used needles and syringes is very important. They should never be reused. Needles must always be disposed in a puncture resistant container.** A container may be available with the needles and syringes. Ask your pharmacist for help.

Side effects and what to do

The following side effects are common or severe. You may not have all of the side effects. Other side effects may occur. If you have any unusual or bothersome symptoms, discuss with your doctor.

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
Most Common Side Effects	
<p>Abnormal liver lab tests (may be severe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your doctor will monitor these regularly. Call your doctor if you have yellowish skin or eyes, or unusual dark urine. 	Contact doctor if no improvement or if severe
<p>Hair thinning or loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a gentle soft brush; care should be taken with hair sprays, bleaches, dyes and perms. • Your hair usually grows back after your treatment ends, but the texture or colour may change. 	-
<p>Poor Appetite; don't feel like eating; weight loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat foods that you like and try to eat regular small meals. • Use meal supplements if possible. See a dietitian. 	Contact doctor if no improvement or if severe

<p>Feeling nervous, depressed, sleepy confused (may be severe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try talking with family and friends. Maintain proper nutrition, exercise, and good sleep habits. • If this lasts more than 2 weeks or have suicidal thoughts, contact your doctor. 	<p>Contact doctor if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p>Diarrhea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May occur days to weeks after the drug is given / after treatment starts. • Drink plenty of clear fluids. Limit hot, spicy, fried foods, foods/drinks with caffeine, orange or prune juice. Try a low-fiber BRAT diet (Bananas, white Rice, Apple sauce, Toast made with white bread). • Take anti-diarrhea drug(s) if given to you by your doctor. • Also see Diarrhea pamphlet.* 	<p>Contact doctor if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p>Flu-like feeling (fever, chills, muscle pain, without signs of infection such as sore throat, cough, or blistering rash on skin)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May happen in hours to days after drug is given / after starting treatment. • These side effects may go away as your body gets used to the drug. • Contact your doctor or nurse if these feelings bother you. • May take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets as needed. 	<p>Contact doctor if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p>Reactions at the injection site (redness, itchiness, bruising, mild rash or swelling)</p>	<p>Contact doctor if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p>Nausea and vomiting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May occur in hours to days after the dose is given/ after treatment starts. • Drink clear fluids and avoid large meals. Get fresh air and rest. • Limit spicy, fried foods or foods with a strong smell. • Take anti-nausea drug(s) exactly as directed by your doctor. It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it. • Contact your doctor if nausea lasts more than 48 hours or vomiting for more than 24 hours. • Also see Nausea & Vomiting pamphlet.* 	<p>Contact doctor if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p>Rash; dry, itchy skin (may be severe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay out of the sun; wear sunblock, a hat and cover exposed skin. • Use daily moisturizer. • <i>Severe rash may occur on the body/limbs with blistering or peeling of skin:</i> Get emergency medical help right away if this occurs. 	<p>Contact doctor if no improvement or if severe</p>
Less Common Side Effects, but may be Severe	
<p>Drug reaction (fever, severe rash, itchiness, flushing, dizziness, shortness of breath, chest or throat tightness)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may be given medicines to prevent or treat this reaction • May occur during or shortly after the drug is given. 	<p>Get emergency medical help right away</p>
<p>Heart problems (irregular heartbeat, chest pain, fainting, swelling in legs/ankles/belly, shortness of breath)</p>	<p>Get emergency medical help right away</p>

Blockage of an artery (blood vessel) in your heart, brain, chest, belly, or limbs; this may result in stroke (sudden loss of vision, speech, or the use of your limb(s)) or heart attack (chest pain, shortness of breath), or pain in chest, belly or limb	Get emergency medical help right away
Autoimmune disorder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may experience worsening of a pre-existing disorder such as thyroid disorder or diabetes 	Contact doctor if no improvement or if severe
Abnormal kidney lab tests (may be severe) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your doctor may monitor your kidney function regularly. Call your doctor or get emergency medical help if you have signs of kidney problems such as body swelling, passing little or no urine, or recent unusual weight gain. 	Get emergency medical help right away
Bleeding from the digestive system (Watch for vomit with bright red blood or coffee-grounds, or stools with bright red blood or which look black/tarry)	Get emergency medical help right away
Rapid breakdown of red blood cells (yellowing of the skin or eyes and/or red-brown urine)	Get emergency medical help right away
Pancreas problems (increased pain in centre of belly and may extend to the back, appetite or weight loss)	Get emergency medical help right away
Skin sensitivity to sunlight (itchy rash and other skin reactions when exposed to the sun) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay out of the sun; wear sunblock, a hat and cover exposed skin. Use daily moisturizer. 	Contact doctor if no improvement or if severe
Lung problems (increased cough, breathing problems, chest pain, coughing blood)	Get emergency medical help right away
Eye problems (may be severe) (dry eyes, redness, irritation, pain, tearing, sensitivity to light, blurred vision or other unusual changes with your sight) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid wearing contact lenses while taking this drug For dry eyes, may try artificial tears or ointment. Contact your doctor if this becomes bothersome. 	Contact doctor as soon as possible (office hours)
Breakdown of muscle cells, may lead to kidney problems (severe muscle pain or weakness, dark urine)	Get emergency medical help right away
Blood clot (limb pain or swelling, hardened vein in limb), may occur in lungs (sudden start of coughing, breathing problems, chest pain, coughing blood)	Get emergency medical help right away

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.