

## Medication Information Sheet

## pegfilgrastim (peg-fill-GRA-stim)

*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:** Neulasta®, Lapelga™, Fulphila™

**Appearance:** Clear, colourless solution for injection in a pre-filled syringe

### What is this medication for?

- Pegfilgrastim is the long-acting form of filgrastim, used to stimulate the growth of white blood cells.
- Chemotherapy drugs often slow down the growth of new white blood cells, resulting in a higher chance of infection and delays in the recovery of blood counts. Pegfilgrastim is used to stimulate the growth of white blood cells.
- Pegfilgrastim is available as a biosimilar medication. See our [biosimilar](#) pamphlet for more information.

### What should I do before I have this medication?

- Tell your doctor if you have/had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have / had sickle cell disease or any allergies.
- People who have cancer are at a higher risk of developing other cancers. Also, some cancer medications, may increase this risk. You should discuss this with your doctor.

### How will this medication affect sex, 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: Unlikely

### How is this medication given?

- This drug is given by injection under the skin.
- Choose a different injection site for each dose. Some usual sites of injection are: the outer area of the upper arms, the front of your middle thighs, upper outer areas of the buttocks, or belly

(except for the waist and the 2-inch area around your belly button).

- Only a single injection is needed per cycle of chemotherapy. It must be given at least 24 hours after your course of chemotherapy.
- There should be a 2-week period between your pegfilgrastim dose and your next chemotherapy. If you miss your pegfilgrastim dose, check with your doctor before taking the missed dose.
- If you (or your caregiver) are giving the injection, be sure you (or your caregiver) understand the proper method for injecting your dose. Talk to your nurse for more information.
- Inspect each syringe of pegfilgrastim before using. It should be clear, colourless and there should be no particles in the liquid.
- You may take the medication out of the refrigerator about 30 minutes prior to using it, so that the injection is more comfortable.

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

- This medication can interact with other medications and can result in the treatment not working as well or cause severe side effects.
- 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.
- **For mild aches and pain or fever:**
  - If you feel unwell, take your temperature before taking any medications for pain or fever. They may hide a fever.
  - You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets. Ask your health care team about the right dose for you.
  - Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid, ASA), including low dose aspirin for heart conditions, may increase your chance of bleeding. Talk to your health care team before you start or stop these medications.
  - **Talk to your health care team or go to the closest emergency room right away if you have a fever.** See the [Fever](#) pamphlet for more information.

## How should I safely store this medication?

- Keep refrigerated; do not freeze. However, if accidentally frozen, it can be allowed to thaw in the refrigerator and then used. If frozen for a second time, do not use it.
- Keep in the carton to protect it from light until ready to use.
- Keep out of reach of children and pets.
- Proper disposal of needle covers, needles and syringes are very important. They should never be reused. These must always be disposed in a puncture-proof container. Ask your pharmacist for help on how to properly dispose of these items, including the filled container.

## What are the side effects of this medication?

The following side effects have been seen in people using pegfilgrastim with other chemotherapy drugs, so some of these effects may also be related to chemotherapy.

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.

If you develop signs or symptoms of an infection (if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is above 38.3°C or 100.9°F at any time OR above 38.0°C or 100.4°F for at least one hour, chills, sore throat) call your doctor and get emergency medical help IMMEDIATELY.

Most Common Side Effects	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Pain in joints or muscles, lower back pain, bone pain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take painkiller(s) as directed, if given to you by your doctor.</li> <li>• Otherwise, take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets as needed for mild aches and pains. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the right dose for you.</li> <li>• If the pain still bothers you after 24 to 48 hours, call your doctor or nurse.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>

Less Common Side Effects, but may be Severe	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Lung problems</b> (increased cough, breathing problems, chest pain, coughing blood)</p>	<p>Get emergency medical help right away</p>
<p><b>Rash; inflammation of blood vessels in the skin</b> (red or purple patches on the skin, rash/patches that do not turn white when pressed)</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team as soon as possible</p>
<p><b>Allergic reaction</b> (fever, severe rash, itchiness, swollen face, lip or tongue, chest or throat tightness; may occur during or shortly after the drug is given)</p> <p><b>Leakage of fluid from small blood vessels (may be severe), leading to low blood pressure (dizziness, fainting), fluid build-up in body (swelling, difficulty breathing)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May occur during or shortly after the drug is given</li> </ul>	<p>Get emergency medical help right away</p>

Less Common Side Effects, but may be Severe	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<b>Reactions at the injection site</b> (redness, itchiness, bruising, mild rash or swelling) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be sure to use a different injection site each time.</li> <li>• Ask your nurse to help you with your injection technique</li> </ul>	Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<b>Kidney injury</b> (puffiness in face or ankles, blood in the urine or brown coloured urine, or passing little or no urine)	Get emergency medical help right away
<b>Sickle cell crisis</b> (if you have a history sickle cell disease) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch for periodic episodes of pain which develops when sickle-shaped red blood cells block blood flow through tiny blood vessels to your chest, abdomen and joints. Pain can also occur in your bones.</li> </ul>	Get emergency medical help right away
<b>Enlarged spleen (may rupture if severe)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch for pain in the upper belly or at the left shoulder tip.</li> </ul>	Get emergency medical help right away

**May 2020** Added "Fulphila" to Other names section

For more links on how to manage your symptoms go to [www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms](http://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.*