PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Heparin

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: Canada

Heparin Leo

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to thin the blood so that clots will not form.
- It is used to treat blood clots.
- It is used to keep blood from clotting in catheters.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.

- If you are allergic to pork products, talk with the doctor.
- If you have any of these health problems: Bleeding problems or low platelet count.
- If you have had a low platelet count caused by heparin or pentosan polysulfate.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- You may bleed more easily. Be careful and avoid injury. Use a soft toothbrush and an electric razor.
- Severe and sometimes deadly bleeding problems have happened with this drug.

- This drug has caused a problem called heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT). HIT that leads to blood clots is called heparin-induced thrombocytopenia and thrombosis (HITTS). HIT and HITTS can be deadly or cause other problems. They can happen up to several weeks after stopping this drug. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.
- If you fall or hurt yourself, or if you hit your head, call your doctor right away. Talk with your doctor even if you feel fine.
- Be sure you have the right product. This drug comes in many containers and strengths. If you have any questions, call your doctor or pharmacist.
- If you are allergic to sulfites, talk with your doctor. Some products have sulfites.
- If you are over the age of 60, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- Some products have benzyl alcohol. If possible, avoid products with benzyl alcohol in newborns or infants.

Serious side effects can happen in these children with some doses of benzyl alcohol, including if given with other drugs that have benzyl alcohol. Talk with the doctor to see if this product has benzyl alcohol in it.

- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of bleeding like throwing up or coughing up blood; vomit that looks like coffee grounds; blood in the urine; black, red, or tarry stools; bleeding from

the gums; abnormal vaginal bleeding; bruises without a cause or that get bigger; or bleeding you cannot stop.

- Weakness on 1 side of the body, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, drooping on one side of the face, or blurred eyesight.
- Feeling confused.
- Very bad headache.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Unusual burning, especially on the soles of the feet.
- Swelling, warmth, numbness, change of color, or pain in a leg or arm.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- Shortness of breath.
- Back pain.
- Groin or pelvic pain or swelling.
- Change in skin color where the shot was given.
- Skin breakdown where this drug is used.
- Fever or chills.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- It may be given into a catheter, as a shot into a vein or the fatty part of the skin, or as an infusion into a vein over a period of time. Talk with the doctor if you have questions.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else’s drugs.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- Some drugs may have another patient information

leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.

- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not

endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2023-05-04

Copyright

© 2024 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Heparin - Last updated on December 12, 2022
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center