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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Aldesleukin

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: US

Proleukin

## Brand Names: Canada

Proleukin

## Warning

- This drug is to only be used in people with good heart and lung function. Tell your doctor if you have ever had any heart or lung disease.
- This drug may cause a very bad and sometimes deadly problem called capillary leak syndrome (CLS). CLS may lead to low blood pressure and harm to the body. It may also lead to a heartbeat that is not normal, chest pain or pressure, heart attack, lung or breathing problems, bleeding or lower blood flow in the stomach or bowel, kidney problems, swelling, or feeling confused. Talk with the doctor.
- Tell your doctor if you get signs of capillary leak syndrome (CLS) like change in the amount of urine passed; unable to pass urine; blood in the urine; a heartbeat that does not feel normal; chest pain or pressure; a fast heartbeat; shortness of breath; a big weight gain; throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds; or if you have black, tarry, or bloody stools.
- This drug may raise the chance of getting a very bad infection. If you have an infection, it needs to be treated before you get this drug. If you have any infection, are taking antibiotics now or in the recent past, or have had many infections, talk with your doctor. Tell your doctor if you get signs of infection

like a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, wound that will not heal, or anal itching or pain.

- Tell your doctor right away if you feel sluggish or very sleepy. You may need to stop this drug.

## **What is this drug used for?**

- It is used to treat kidney cancer.
- It is used to treat a type of skin cancer (melanoma).

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

- If you have an allergy to aldesleukin or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to any drugs like this one, any other drugs, foods, or other substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had, like rash; hives; itching; shortness of breath; wheezing; cough; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat; or any other signs.
- If you have had an organ transplant, talk with your doctor. This drug may raise the chance of organ transplant rejection.
- If you have had an abnormal heart stress test or an abnormal lung function test.
- If you have had any of these health problems with this drug in the past: Bleeding or lower blood flow in the stomach or bowel; chest pain; coma or the need for a breathing tube; kidney problems; fast or abnormal heartbeat, heart attack, or other heart problems; hole in the GI (gastrointestinal) tract; lung or breathing problems; mental or mood problems; or seizures.
- If you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed.

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.
- Diarrhea, throwing up, upset stomach, and feeling less hungry are common with this drug. If these happen, talk with your doctor about ways to lower these side effects. Call your doctor right away if any of these effects bother you, do not get better, or get very bad.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- Have your heart and lung function checked. Talk with your doctor.
- High blood sugar has happened with this drug. This includes diabetes that is new or worse. Talk with the doctor.
- Check your blood sugar as you have been told by your doctor.
- Tell your doctor if you have signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, more thirst, more hungry, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- You may have more chance of getting an infection. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.
- You may bleed more easily. Be careful and avoid injury. Use a soft toothbrush and an electric razor.
- If you are having an exam or test with contrast or have had one within the past 48 hours, talk with your doctor.
- Talk with your doctor before getting any vaccines. Use of some vaccines with this drug may either raise the chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- If you have an autoimmune disease or a health problem with inflammation, talk with your doctor. Worsening of these problems can happen with this drug. Sometimes, this may be severe.
- A skin reaction called bullous pemphigoid has happened with drugs like this

one. Sometimes, people have had to go to the hospital. Call your doctor right away if you have blisters or if your skin starts to break down.

- A very bad skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause very bad health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.
- Call your doctor right away if you have signs of liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Call your doctor right away if you have signs of kidney problems like not able to pass urine; change in how much urine is passed; bloody, brown, or foamy urine; shortness of breath or cough; or puffy or swollen face, feet, or hands.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan on getting pregnant. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks of using this drug while you are pregnant.

## **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 thyroid problems like a change in weight without trying, feeling nervous and excitable, feeling restless, feeling very weak, hair thinning, low mood (depression), neck swelling, not able to focus, not able to handle heat or cold, period (menstrual) changes, shakiness, or sweating.
- Signs of gallbladder problems like pain in the upper right belly area, right

shoulder area, or between the shoulder blades; yellow skin or eyes; fever with chills; bloating; or very upset stomach or throwing up.

- Signs of too much acid in the blood (acidosis) like confusion; fast breathing; fast heartbeat; a heartbeat that does not feel normal; very bad stomach pain, upset stomach, or throwing up; feeling very sleepy; shortness of breath; or feeling very tired or weak.
- Signs of electrolyte problems like mood changes, confusion, muscle pain or weakness, a heartbeat that does not feel normal, seizures, not hungry, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Weakness on 1 side of the body, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, drooping on one side of the face, or blurred eyesight.
- Very bad dizziness or passing out.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Trouble speaking.
- Trouble walking.
- Change in balance.
- Loss of eyesight.
- Mental, mood, or behavior changes that are new or worse.
- Seizures.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Any skin change.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Swelling.
- Shortness of breath.

## **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 any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Stomach pain.
- Dizziness.
- Anxiety.
- Runny nose.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Weight gain.

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.

## **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 is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.

## **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 a list of all your drugs (prescription, natural products, vitamins, OTC) with you. Give this list to your doctor.

- Talk with the doctor before starting any new drug, including prescription or OTC, natural products, or vitamins.
- 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.
- 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 information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

## **Last Reviewed Date**

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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