



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Darbepoetin Alfa

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**

Aranesp (Albumin Free)

### **Brand Names: Canada**

Aranesp

### **Warning**

- This drug may raise the chance of heart attack, stroke, heart failure, blood clots, and death. Talk with the doctor.
- People with some types of cancer have died sooner when using this drug. This drug also raised the chance of tumor growth and the tumor happening again in these people. Talk with the doctor.
- Your doctor will need to watch your blood cell counts and follow you closely to change the dose to match your body's needs. Talk with your doctor.

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

- It is used to treat anemia.
- 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 have an allergy to darbepoetin alfa 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 high blood pressure.
- If you have a kind of anemia called Pure Red Cell Aplasia (PRCA).
- If you have cancer, talk with your doctor.

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?

### All products:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- If you will be having surgery, talk with your doctor. You may need to take another drug to keep you from getting blood clots while you get this drug.
- High blood pressure has happened with this drug. Have your blood pressure checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- 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.
- Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about any risks to your baby.

### Prefilled syringes:

- If you have a latex allergy, talk with your doctor.

## 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 high blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Chest pain or pressure or a fast heartbeat.
- Shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- 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.
- Swelling, warmth, numbness, change of color, or pain in a leg or arm.
- Cool or pale arm or leg.
- Coughing up blood.
- Trouble walking.
- Dizziness or passing out.

- Sweating a lot.
- Seizures.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Pale skin.
- 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.

### **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:

- Belly pain.
- Cough.

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 a shot into the fatty part of the skin.
- It may be given as a shot into a vein during dialysis.
- To gain the most benefit, do not miss doses.
- Keep using this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.
- If you will be giving yourself the shot, your doctor or nurse will teach you how to give the shot.
- Follow how to use as you have been told by the doctor or read the package insert.
- Do not shake.
- Do not use if it has been shaken.
- Do not use if it has been frozen.
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Do not use if the solution is cloudy, leaking, or has particles.
- Do not use if solution changes color.
- Do not give into red or irritated skin.
- Throw away any part left over after the dose is given.
- Throw away needles in a needle/sharp disposal box. Do not reuse needles or other items. When the box is full, follow all local rules for getting rid of it. Talk with a doctor or pharmacist if you have any 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?**

- Store in a refrigerator. Do not freeze.
- Store in the carton to protect from light.
- 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.

## **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.
- 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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