PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Pembrolizumab

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ 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

Keytruda

Brand Names: Canada

Keytruda

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat cancer.

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 taking any of these drugs: Lenalidomide, pomalidomide, or thalidomide.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you

take this drug or for 4 months after your last dose.

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.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- This drug may cause very bad side effects. Sometimes these have been life-threatening or deadly. These may happen in the lungs, bowels, liver, kidney, pituitary gland, thyroid gland, or other parts of the body. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- High blood sugar has happened with this drug. This includes diabetes that is new or worse.

- Check your blood sugar as you have been told by your doctor.
- High cholesterol and triglyceride levels have happened with this drug. If you have high cholesterol or triglycerides, talk with your doctor.
- If you have constipation, diarrhea, upset stomach, or decreased appetite, talk with your doctor. There may be ways to lower these side effects.
- Infusion reactions have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these could be very bad or life-threatening. Talk with the doctor.
- If you have had an organ transplant or other type of transplant like cornea transplant, talk with your doctor. You will need to watch for signs of organ or cornea graft rejection.
- If you are having or have had a stem cell transplant with stem cells from someone else (allogeneic), talk with your doctor. Some problems with these types of stem cell transplants have happened in people who have had this drug. These problems can be very bad and can lead to death.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- This drug may cause harm to an unborn baby. A

pregnancy test will be done before you start this drug to show that you are NOT pregnant.

- If you may become pregnant, you must use birth control while taking this drug and for 4 months after the last dose. If you get pregnant, call your doctor right away.

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 bowel problems (such as colitis) like black, tarry, or bloody stools; fever; mucus in the stools; throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds; or severe stomach pain, constipation, or diarrhea.
- Signs of electrolyte problems like mood changes; confusion; muscle pain, cramps, or spasms; weakness; shakiness; change in balance; an abnormal heartbeat;

seizures; loss of appetite; or severe upset stomach or throwing up.

- Signs of lung or breathing problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough, or fever.
- Signs of a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of kidney problems like unable to pass urine, change in how much urine is passed, blood in the urine, or a big weight gain.
- Signs of thyroid, pituitary, or adrenal gland problems like change in mood or behavior, change in weight or taste, constipation, deeper voice, dizziness, fainting, feeling cold, feeling very tired, hair loss, severe or long-lasting headache, change in sex interest, eye problems, fast heartbeat, more sweating, fast or deep breathing, sweet smelling breath, change in smell of urine or sweat, or

passing urine more often.

- Signs of nervous system problems like change in balance, change in mood or behavior, feeling confused or sleepy, fever, memory problems, severe muscle weakness, numbness or tingling in the arms or legs, seizures, stiff neck, or bright lights bother your eyes.
- Signs of high or low blood sugar like breath that smells like fruit, dizziness, fast breathing, fast heartbeat, feeling confused, feeling sleepy, feeling weak, flushing, headache, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, shaking, or sweating.
- Chest pain or pressure, a fast heartbeat, or an abnormal heartbeat.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Flushing.
- Sweating a lot.
- Swelling in the arms or legs.
- White patches on the skin.
- Eye problems have happened with this drug. Some types of eye problems may need to be treated right away to lower the chance of lasting eyesight loss. Call your doctor right away if you have any changes in eyesight,

eye pain, or very bad eye irritation.

- Severe skin reactions may happen with this drug. These include Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS), toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN), and other serious reactions. Sometimes, body organs may also be affected. These reactions can be deadly. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin; red or irritated eyes; sores in your mouth, throat, nose, eyes, genitals, or any areas of skin; fever; chills; body aches; shortness of breath; or swollen glands.

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:

- Constipation, diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Back, bone, joint, muscle, or neck pain.
- Headache.
- Mouth irritation.
- Nose or throat irritation.
- Dry skin, mouth, or eyes.

- Weight loss.
- Hair loss.
- Change in taste.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Signs of a common cold.
- Flu-like signs.

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 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 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.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, 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

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

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

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