Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Penpulimab

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.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat nose or throat 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 breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug or for 4 months after your last dose.

This drug may interact with other drugs or health problems.

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.
- 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 triglyceride levels have happened with this drug. Tell your doctor if you have ever had high triglyceride levels.
- Severe health problems in some organs can happen with this drug. These may happen in the bowels; lungs; liver; thyroid, pituitary, and adrenal glands; pancreas; kidneys; or other parts of the body. Nerve problems, muscle problems, or severe skin reactions may also happen. Sometimes, these problems have been deadly. These problems may happen anytime during treatment or even after treatment ends. If you have questions, 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.
- 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 lung or breathing problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough, or fever.
- 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 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 high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- 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 a very bad skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.
- Signs of nervous system problems like a burning, numbness, or tingling

feeling; change in balance; confusion; dizziness; hallucinations; memory problems or loss; new or worse behavior or mood changes like anxiety, depression, or thoughts of suicide; trouble focusing; trouble sleeping; or trouble thinking or speaking.

- Signs of heart problems like chest pain; fast, slow, or abnormal heartbeat; or shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- 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 a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Fever, chills, or sore throat; any unexplained bruising or bleeding; or feeling very tired or weak.
- Severe or long-lasting muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness (with or without fever).
- Swollen gland.
- Change in eyesight, eye pain, or severe eye irritation.
- Swelling of belly.
- Some people have had side effects during the infusion. Sometimes, these could be severe or life-threatening. Tell your doctor if you have back or neck pain, chills, shaking, dizziness, passing out, fever, flushing, itching, rash, shortness of breath, swelling of the face, or wheezing.
- It is common to have diarrhea with this drug. However, a bowel problem (colitis) with diarrhea has happened with this drug. This may lead to tears or holes in the bowels and may be life-threatening. Call your doctor right away if you have bloody stools; dark, tarry, or sticky stools; diarrhea; or severe stomach pain.
- Rarely, severe eye problems (including retinal detachment) have happened with this drug. Call your doctor or get medical help right away if you start to see halos or bright colors around lights, flashing lights, floaters, a curtain-like

shadow coming across your eye, or have sudden eyesight loss.

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:

- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Constipation.
- Decreased appetite.
- Weight loss.
- Feeling dizzy, tired, or weak.
- Headache.
- Back, joint, muscle, neck, arm, or leg pain.
- Bone pain.
- Signs of a common cold.

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 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

2025-05-02

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

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.

Penpulimab - Last updated on May 5, 2025
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Last Updated
May 5, 2025
Learn about our Health Information Policy.