PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Interferon Beta-1b

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

Betaseron; Extavia

Brand Names: Canada

Betaseron; Extavia [DSC]

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat MS (multiple sclerosis).

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.

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.
- If you have a latex allergy, talk with your doctor. Some products have latex.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.
- This drug is not a cure for MS (multiple sclerosis). Stay under the care of your doctor.
- Some of these drugs have albumin (part of the blood) in them and may have viruses that may cause disease. This drug is screened, tested, and treated to lower the chance that it carries an infection. Talk with the doctor.
- It is common to have reactions where the injection was given. This includes redness, pain, itching, and swelling. Sometimes, reactions at the injection site have been severe and have led to treatment in a hospital or surgery. Check with your doctor if you have any reaction that bothers you, is severe, or does not get better in a few days. Call your doctor right away if you have any break in the skin; color changes (blue or black); or swelling, pain, or other signs of skin infection like oozing or heat where the injection was given.
- Very bad health problems like thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura/hemolytic uremic syndrome (TTP/HUS) have happened with drugs like this one. Sometimes, this has been deadly. This has happened several weeks to years after starting treatment. Call your doctor right away if you feel very tired or weak or have any bruising or bleeding, change in balance, change in eyesight, change in how much urine is passed, dark urine, fever, pale skin, trouble speaking or thinking, weakness on 1 side of the body, or yellow skin or eyes.

- Capillary leak syndrome (CLS) is a very bad health problem that has happened with this drug. Sometimes, CLS can be deadly. Tell your doctor right away if you get signs of CLS like change in how much urine is passed; not able to pass urine; blood in the urine; a fast or abnormal heartbeat; chest pain or pressure; dizziness or passing out; shortness of breath; a big weight gain; swelling; throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds; or if you have black, tarry, or bloody stools.
- High blood pressure in the lungs has happened with this drug. This can be severe and may need to be treated in a hospital. This may happen years after starting treatment. One patient taking a drug like this one needed a lung transplant. Tell your doctor right away if you have new or worse tiredness, weakness, or shortness of breath.
- 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 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 lupus like a rash on the cheeks or other body parts, sunburn easy, muscle or joint pain, chest pain or shortness of breath, or swelling in the arms or legs.

- Signs of high blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- New or worse behavior or mood changes like depression or thoughts of suicide.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Seizures.
- Change in balance.
- Swollen gland.
- Chest pain.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Not able to get or keep an erection.
- Vaginal bleeding that is not normal.
- Low white blood cell counts have happened with this drug. This may lead to a higher chance of getting an infection. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat.
- Heart problems like heart failure may get worse with this drug. Call your doctor right away if you have a fast heartbeat, a need to pass more urine at night, shortness of breath, swollen ankles, or tightness in the chest. Call your doctor right away if you are not able to exercise as much or if you cannot lay flat in bed.

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:

- Irritation where the shot is given.
- Flu-like signs. These include headache, weakness, fever, shakes, aches, pains, and sweating. Mild pain drugs may help.
- Stomach pain.

- Trouble sleeping.
- Muscle pain.
- Tense muscles.
- Passing urine more often.
- Feeling tired or weak.

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 a shot into the fatty part of the skin.
- If you will be giving yourself the shot, your doctor or nurse will teach you how to give the shot.
- This drug is not taken every day. Be sure you know how to take it. Talk with your doctor if you have questions.
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- This drug needs to be mixed before use. Follow how to mix as you were told by the doctor.
- Do not shake.
- Move the site where you give the shot with each shot.
- Do not give into skin that is irritated, bruised, red, infected, hard, or scarred.
- Throw away any part left over after the dose is given.

- Do not use if the solution is cloudy, leaking, or has particles.
- Do not use if solution changes color.
- 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.
- Other drugs may be given with this drug to help avoid side effects.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Use a missed dose as soon as you think about it. Then use your next dose about 48 hours later.
- Do not use this drug 2 days in a row. If you use more than your doctor has told you or you use this drug 2 days in a row, call your doctor right away.
- If you are not sure what to do if you miss a dose, call your doctor.

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

Estavia

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- Before mixing, store at room temperature between 68°F and 77°F (20°C and 25°C). You may store at temperatures between 59°F and 86°F (15°C and 30°C) for up to 3 months or until the expiration date, whichever comes first.

Betaseron:

- Before mixing, store in the refrigerator or at room temperature.

All products:

- Use right away after mixing or you may store in a refrigerator for up to 3 hours.
- Do not freeze.

- 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.
- 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

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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.

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