

## Darbepoetin Alfa (Aranesp)

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### About This Drug

Darbepoetin alfa is used to treat anemia. It helps your body make more red blood cells. It can be given in the vein (IV) or as an injection under your skin (subcutaneously).

### Possible Side Effects

- Pain in your abdomen
- Swelling of the hands, feet, or any other part of the body
- Blood clots and events such as stroke and heart attacks. A blood clot in your leg may cause your leg to swell, appear red and warm, and/or cause pain. A blood clot in your lungs may cause trouble breathing, pain when breathing, and/or chest pain.

**Note:** Each of the side effects above was reported in 1% or greater of patients with cancer receiving chemotherapy and treated with darbepoetin alfa. All possible side effects are not included. Your side effects may be different depending on your cancer diagnosis, condition, or if you are receiving other drugs in combination. Please discuss any concerns or questions with your medical team.

### Warnings and Precautions

- Changes in your heart function. If you are treated with darbepoetin alfa to increase your hemoglobin (red blood cells) to near the same level as healthy people, you may develop serious heart problems such as heart attack, stroke, or heart failure which could be life-threatening, due to an increased level of hemoglobin in your body. Your hemoglobin level will be checked as needed, to lower the risk of these complications.
- Severe high blood pressure
- Seizure. Common symptoms of a seizure can include confusion, blacking out, passing out, loss of hearing or vision, blurred vision, unusual smells or tastes (such as burning rubber), trouble talking, tremors or shaking in parts or all of the body, repeated body movements, tense muscles that do not relax, and loss of control of urine and bowels. There are other less common symptoms of seizures. **If you or your family member suspects you are having a seizure, call 911 right away.**
- If you have certain types of cancer, your tumor may grow faster, and you may die sooner if darbepoetin alfa is used.
- Antibodies to darbepoetin alfa. These antibodies can block or lessen your body's ability to make red blood cells and can cause you to have severe anemia. This is extremely rare and usually affects patients with chronic kidney disease and/or hepatitis C.

- Allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis are rare but may happen in some patients. Signs of allergic reaction to this drug may be swelling of the face, feeling like your tongue or throat are swelling, trouble breathing, rash, itching, fever, chills, feeling dizzy, and/or feeling that your heart is beating in a fast or not normal way. **If this happens, do not take another dose of this drug. You should get urgent medical treatment.**
- Severe allergic skin reaction. You may develop blisters on your skin that are filled with fluid or a severe red rash all over your body that may be painful.

**Note:** Some of the side effects above are very rare. If you have concerns and/or questions, please discuss them with your medical team.

## How to Take Your Medication

- Talk to your doctor, nurse and/or pharmacist for proper preparation, dosing, and administration if you are self-injecting this medicine.
- Do not shake the medicine. Do not use if the medicine has been shaken or frozen.
- **Missed dose:** If you miss a dose, contact your doctor.
- **Handling:** Wash your hands after handling your medicine, your caretakers should not handle your medicine with bare hands and should wear latex gloves.
- **Storage:** Store this medicine in the original package in the refrigerator, between 36°F to 46°F (2°C to 8°C). Do not freeze. Protect from light.
- **Disposal:** Discuss with your nurse or your doctor how to dispose of unused medicine/needles.

## Treating Side Effects

- If you get a rash do not put anything on it unless your doctor or nurse says you may. Keep the area around the rash clean and dry. Ask your doctor for medicine if your rash bothers you.
- Keeping your pain under control is important to your well-being. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you are experiencing pain.

## Food and Drug Interactions

- There are no known interactions of darbepoetin alfa with food.
- This drug may interact with other medicines. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the prescription and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, and others) that you are taking at this time. Also, check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new prescription or over-the-counter medicines, or dietary supplements to make sure that there are no interactions.

## When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any of these symptoms and/or any new or unusual symptoms:



- Headache that does not go away
- Blurry vision or other changes in eyesight
- Flu-like symptoms: fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, and fatigue (low energy, feeling weak)
- Wheezing and/or trouble breathing
- Feeling that your heart is beating fast or in a not normal way (palpitations)
- Your leg is swollen, red, warm, and/or painful
- Symptoms of a stroke such as sudden numbness or weakness of your face, arm, or leg, mostly on one side of your body; sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, feeling dizzy, loss of balance or coordination; or sudden, bad headache with no known cause. **If you have any of these symptoms for 2 minutes, call 911.**
- Chest pain or symptoms of a heart attack. Most heart attacks involve pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes. The pain may go away and come back or it can be constant. It can feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain. Sometimes pain is felt in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach. **If any of these symptoms last 2 minutes, call 911.**
- Symptoms of a seizure such as confusion, blacking out, passing out, loss of hearing or vision, blurred vision, unusual smells or tastes (such as burning rubber), trouble talking, tremors or shaking in parts or all of the body, repeated body movements, tense muscles that do not relax, and loss of control of urine and bowels. **If you or your family member suspects you are having a seizure, call 911 right away.**
- Pain in your abdomen that does not go away
- Weight gain of 5 pounds in one week (fluid retention)
- Swelling of the hands, feet, or any other part of the body
- A new rash or a rash that is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Signs of allergic reaction: swelling of the face, feeling like your tongue or throat are swelling, trouble breathing, rash, itching, fever, chills, feeling dizzy, and/or feeling that your heart is beating in a fast or not normal way. **If this happens call 911 for emergency care.**
- If you think you may be pregnant

## Reproduction Warnings

- **Pregnancy warning:** It is not known if this drug may harm an unborn child. For this reason, be sure to talk with your doctor if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant while getting this drug. Let your doctor know right away if you think you may be pregnant during treatment.
- **Lactation warning:** It is not known if this drug passes into breast milk. For this reason, women should talk to their doctor about the risks and benefits of breastfeeding during treatment with this drug because this drug may enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** Fertility studies have not been done with this drug. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children. Ask for information on sperm or egg banking.

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