

Epoetin alfa-xxxx (Procrit, Epogen, Retacrit)

About This Drug

Epoetin alfa-xxxx 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

- Decrease in the number of white blood cells. This may raise your risk of infection.
- Nausea and vomiting (throwing up)
- Soreness of the mouth and throat. You may have red areas, white patches, or sores that hurt.
- Difficulty swallowing
- Blood sugar levels may change
- Decreased level of potassium in your blood
- Weight loss
- Bone, muscle and/or joint pain
- Headache
- Depression
- Trouble sleeping
- Cough
- Rash
- Blood clots and events such as stroke and heart attack, which can be life-threatening. 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 5% or greater of patients with cancer on chemotherapy treated with epoetin alfa-xxxx. 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

- Heart problems. If you are treated with epoetin alfa-xxxx 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.

- If you have certain types of cancer, your tumor may grow faster, and you may die sooner if epoetin alfa-xxxx is used.
- Antibodies to epoetin alfa-xxxx. 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.**
- Epoetin alfa-xxxx is made from human blood/albumin (protein) and carries an extremely rare risk of transmitting infectious diseases.
- 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

- To decrease the risk of infection, wash your hands regularly.
- Avoid close contact with people who have a cold, the flu, or other infections.
- Take your temperature as your doctor or nurse tells you, and whenever you feel like you may have a fever.
- Manage tiredness by pacing your activities for the day.
- Be sure to include periods of rest between energy-draining activities.
- Get regular exercise, with your doctor's approval. If you feel too tired to exercise vigorously, try taking a short walk.
- Drink plenty of fluids (a minimum of eight glasses per day is recommended).



- If you throw up, you should drink more fluids so that you do not become dehydrated (lack of water in the body from losing too much fluid).
- To help with nausea and vomiting, eat small, frequent meals instead of three large meals a day. Choose foods and drinks that are at room temperature. Ask your nurse or doctor about other helpful tips and medicine that is available to help stop or lessen these symptoms.
- To help with weight loss, drink fluids that contribute calories (whole milk, juice, soft drinks, sweetened beverages, milkshakes, and nutritional supplements) instead of water.
- Include a source of protein at every meal and snack, such as meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, tofu, eggs, nuts, milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream, pudding, and nutritional supplements.
- Mouth care is very important. Your mouth care should consist of routine, gentle cleaning of your teeth or dentures and rinsing your mouth with a mixture of 1/2 teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of water or 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of water. This should be done at least after each meal and at bedtime.
- If you have mouth sores, avoid mouthwash that has alcohol. Also avoid alcohol and smoking because they can bother your mouth and throat.
- To help with itching, moisturize your skin several times a day.
- Avoid sun exposure and apply sunscreen routinely when outdoors.
- 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.
- If you have diabetes, keep good control of your blood sugar level. Tell your nurse or your doctor if your glucose levels are higher or lower than normal.

Food and Drug Interactions

- There are no known interactions of epoetin alfa-xxxx 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:

- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
- Chills
- Headache that does not go away
- Blurry vision or other changes in eyesight
- Lose interest in your daily activities that you used to enjoy and feeling this way every day, and/or you feel hopelessness
- Trouble falling or staying asleep



- Tiredness and/or extreme weakness that interferes with your daily activities
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Wheezing and/or trouble breathing
- Cough that is bothersome
- 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. 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 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.**
- Pain in your mouth or throat that makes it hard to eat or drink
- Nausea that stops you from eating or drinking and/or is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Throwing up more than 3 times a day
- Lasting loss of appetite or rapid weight loss of five pounds in a week
- Abnormal blood sugar
- Unusual thirst, passing urine often, headache, sweating, shakiness, irritability
- New rash and/or itching
- Rash that is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Flu-like symptoms: fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, and fatigue (low energy, feeling weak)
- Your leg is swollen, red, warm and/or painful
- Pain that does not go away, or 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.
- **Breastfeeding warning:** Women should not breastfeed during treatment and for at least 2 weeks after stopping treatment because this drug could 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.

Revised June 2023

