

EPOETIN ALFA / DARBEPOETIN

- Epoetin alfa is also known as Eprex®; darbepoetin is also known as Aranesp®
- Available in different strengths as prefilled syringes for injection

What does the medication look like?



What is this medication for?

Erythropoietin (EPO) tells your bone marrow to make more red blood cells. Sometime, your kidney(s) are not able to make enough EPO to make red blood cells. You will feel tired, weak and possibly short of breath. Epoetin and darbepoetin injections take the place of the EPO that your kidney(s) are not able to make and as a result, your red blood cell count should increase. You will feel less tired when you have enough EPO.

How should I take this medication?

Your hemoglobin measurements determine how much EPO you need. This is the substance in red blood cells that is responsible for carrying oxygen. The usual goal for hemoglobin is 110 to 125 g/L.

For epoetin: this medication is usually injected once a week (for example every Sunday)	Your medication day: _____
For darbepoetin: this medication is usually injected once a week to every 2 weeks (for example every Sunday)	Your medication day: _____

- Epoetin or darbepoetin may be given intravenously (injected into the vein) or subcutaneously (injected under the skin). Your clinic nurse can show you how to administer the medication under the skin at home.
- Make sure you have enough iron and folic acid will help your body use the EPO better.

Missed Dose or Vomited Dose:

If you miss a dose for 1-2 days, take your medication as soon as you remember and then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. If you are 3 or more days late, take your medication as soon as you remember and change your schedule to the new day of the week. Do not double or take extra doses.

If you are to come into the clinic to get the injection, it is important that you come at your regular time and not miss days. You will not feel well if you miss injections and the missed doses will not be “made up” by giving extra. If you need to miss a visit, please make arrangements with the clinic nurse for your injections.

What are some possible side effects of this medication?

Side Effect	Management
Irritation at injection site	May resolve; your doctor may suggest an over-the-counter painkiller or cold compresses.
Increase in blood pressure	Regular blood work will be done to check your red blood cell counts. It is important that you not get too much EPO because it can cause your blood pressure to increase if overused.
Headache, flu-like symptoms	May resolve; your doctor may suggest an over-the-counter painkiller.