Darbepoetin Alfa

Darbepoetin Alfa (Aranesp®)

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 by injection under your skin (subcutaneously).

Possible side effects

- Abdominal pain
- Swelling of your arms, legs, and feet
- Blood clots and events such as stroke and heart attack. 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 treated with darbepoetin alfa. Not all possible side effects are included above.

Warnings and Precautions

- Heart problems. If you are treated with darbepoetin alfa to increase your red blood cells to near the same level as healthy people, you may get serious heart problems such as heart attack, stroke, or heart failure which could result in death. Your hemoglobin level will be checked as needed.
- High blood pressure. Your doctor will check your blood pressure as needed.
- 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 cancer, your tumor may grow faster and you may die sooner if darbepoetin alfa is used.
Antibodies to darbepoetin alfa. Your body may make antibodies to epoetin 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.

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.

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 medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, and others) that you are taking at this time. The safety and use of dietary supplements and alternative diets are often not known. Using these might affect your cancer or interfere with your treatment. Until more is known, you should not use dietary supplements or alternative diets without your cancer doctor’s help.

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 100.5 F (38 C) or higher
- Chills
- Wheezing or trouble breathing
- Your leg or arm 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.
- Pain that does not go away, or is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Lose interest in your daily activities that you used to enjoy and feeling this way every day, and/or you feel hopelessness
- 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.
- 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

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.
- **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 breast feeding during treatment with this drug because this drug may enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breast feeding baby.

Revised June 2017