

Darbepoetin Alfa

Names	The generic drug name is darbepoetin alfa (dar-be-POE-e-tin AL-fa). The brand name is Aranesp®. There may be other names for this medication.
Why am I on this Drug and How is it Given?	<p>This drug is used to treat anemia that may result from chemotherapy used to treat certain kinds of cancer.</p> <p>Your medicine may be injected into a vein (intravenous) or into the tissue between the skin and muscle (subcutaneous injection).</p>
How Does it Work?	<p>Darbepoetin alfa belongs to a class of drugs known as colony stimulating factors (CSF). Darbepoetin stimulates the cells in your bone marrow to make more red blood cells. It is a synthetic version of erythropoietin (EPO), a hormone normally produced by the kidneys.</p> <p>Darbepoetin is not an anticancer drug; its purpose is to provide general support and improve health by increasing your red blood cell count. (Red blood cells carry oxygen to the cells throughout your body.)</p>
What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?	<p>Tell your doctor if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have ever had an allergic reaction to darbepoetin, epoetin alfa (Epogen®, Procrit®), medications made from animal cells, albumin, any other medications, latex, or polysorbate 80• have used darbepoetin alfa or another erythropoietic protein such as epoetin alfa (Epogen, Procrit) in the past• have, or have ever had, bleeding or blood clotting problems, high blood pressure, seizures, heart disease, or a stroke• are pregnant or breastfeeding <p>This drug may interact with other medications, increasing or decreasing their effectiveness or causing harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal or diet supplements that you are taking.</p> <p>Note: Your doctor may prescribe a special diet to help control your blood pressure and to help increase your iron levels so that darbepoetin alfa injection can work as well as possible. Follow these directions carefully and ask your doctor or dietician if you have any questions.</p>

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Headache; body aches, stomach pain
- Cough
- Redness, swelling pain, oozing, or bruising at injection the site
- Diarrhea
- Skin rash or redness

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen headache, nausea, or diarrhea. Check with your doctor before taking any medicine or product for these or any other side effect.
- If you get a rash, keep the area clean and dry and talk to your doctor before using any creams or lotions.

When Should I Call the Doctor?

Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if you have:

- signs of severe allergic reaction: Swelling or tingling in your face, tongue, mouth, or throat; chest tightness; wheezing; trouble breathing or swallowing; dizziness, shortness of breath; heart palpitations; or hives
- signs of a blood clot: Chest pain; trouble breathing or shortness of breath; persistent cough or coughing up blood; pain, swelling, warmth, redness, cold feeling, or pale appearance of an arm or leg
- signs of heart attack: Chest pain or pressure, shortness of breath, pain that spreads to jaw or shoulder, nausea and sweating
- signs of a stroke: Sudden numbness or weakness – especially if only on one side of your body, confusion, sudden severe headache, trouble speaking, seeing, or maintaining your balance

Please let us know if you go to the emergency room or are admitted to the hospital.

Call your doctor immediately if you have:

- signs of infection: Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, chills, cough, sore throat, pain or burning upon urination; redness or tenderness along a vein, at an IV site, or at any other wound or skin irritation
- signs of dehydration: sunken eyes, decreased urination
- signs of anemia: feeling cold most of the time, pale skin, unusual tiredness, loss of energy, dizziness, or fainting

Call your doctor as soon as possible if you:

- gain 5 pounds or more in 1 week
- have diarrhea 5 times or more in 24 hours or have diarrhea with weakness
- nausea or headache not relieved by prescribed medication or that makes it difficult to eat
- fatigue that interferes with normal activities

What Else Do I Need to Know About Darbepoetin?

- Darbepoetin alfa increases the risk of blood clots forming in, or moving to the legs, lungs, or brain. Call your doctor immediately if you have any of the signs of a blood clot listed above.
- Let all your doctors and dentists know you are taking darbepoetin.
- Keep all your doctor and laboratory appointments. Your doctor will order certain lab tests to check your body's response to darbepoetin alfa injection.
- If you have high blood pressure, it may worsen while taking darbepoetin. Continue to take your blood pressure medicine and follow any diet your doctor prescribes.
- Your body may make antibodies that can block or lessen your body's ability to make red blood cells and cause severe anemia. Report any unusual tiredness, loss of energy, dizziness or fainting to your doctor.
- If you will be getting subcutaneous (under the skin) injections: **DO NOT** use this drug if it is discolored, cloudy, or contains particles. Inject just under the skin on the outer area of your upper arms, your stomach (except for a 2-inch circular area around your belly button), the front of your middle thighs, or the upper outer areas of your buttocks. Choose a new spot each time you get a subcutaneous injection. **Do NOT inject into a spot that is tender, red, bruised, hard, lumpy, or swollen.**
- To decrease potential risks: your doctor will prescribe the lowest possible dose and stop your treatment when chemotherapy ends.
- Darbepoetin alfa injection will help to control your anemia only as long as you continue to use it. It may take 2-6 weeks or longer before you feel the full benefit of darbepoetin alfa injection. Continue to use darbepoetin alfa injection even if you feel well. Do not stop using darbepoetin alfa injection without talking to your doctor.
- If you would like more information, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.