

## Epirubicin

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| Names   | The generic drug name is epirubicin. (ep i roo' bi sin). Ellence® is a brand name. There may be other brand names for this medication.  |
| How is It Administered?                                 | Your medicine will be given by injection into a vein (intravenous or IV), usually in your arm, wrist, hand or chest.  |
| What Is This Drug Used For?                             | This medication is used to treat breast cancer.   |
| How Does it Work?                                       | <p>Cancer is a group of diseases in which abnormal cells divide without control. Both normal and cancer cells go through cycles that include a resting phase, active growing phases, and division. Your chemotherapy schedule is based upon the type of cancer you have, the rate at which they divide, and the times when each drug is the most likely to be effective. This is why chemotherapy is typically given in cycles.</p> <p>The faster cells are dividing (reproducing), the more likely it is that chemotherapy will damage/kill the cells. Unfortunately, chemotherapy does not know the difference between cancer cells and normal cells that reproduce frequently. The cells in your body that are the most likely to be affected by chemotherapy are the cells that line the digestive tract (mouth, stomach, intestines), hair follicles, and blood cells.</p> <p>These normal cells will eventually grow back and be healthy. During treatment, however, you may experience side effects from the chemotherapy's effects cells.</p> <p>Epirubicin is an antitumor (anthracycline) antibiotic and is only used to treat cancer. It acts upon/interferes with the cells during certain phases of the cells' cycles and slows or stops the growth of the cancer.</p> |
| What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin Epirubicin? | <p>Tell your doctor if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• have had an allergic reaction to any drugs</li><li>• are pregnant or breastfeeding</li><li>• are having radiation treatments to the chest</li><li>• have or have had gout or kidney disease</li></ul>   |

**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.**

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Low blood counts: Below normal levels of white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets. This increases your risk of infection, fatigue, and/or bleeding.
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Swelling, bruising, and/or sores in the mouth
- Hair loss
- Hot flashes
- Photosensitivity (extreme sensitivity to the sun)
- Fatigue
- Red urine (only for 1-2 days after treatment)

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- To help avoid infections: Stay away from people with colds or other infections. Wash your hands often. Talk to your doctor before you have any vaccinations, such as a flu shot.
- Fatigue: Take rests during the day, limit your activities, and plan activity at a time of day when you feel a bit more energetic. Learn to ask for and accept help with household and daily chores.
- To help decrease risk of bleeding: Be careful when handling sharp objects. Avoid rough sports or other situations that could cause injury. Use an electric razor. Be careful when using a toothbrush or dental floss (your doctor may recommend other ways to clean your teeth).
- To help prevent nausea: Avoid spicy and greasy foods. Try eating smaller meals more often during the day instead of 2-3 large meals.
- To help prevent diarrhea, drink small sips of a liquid such as a sugar-free sports drink often throughout the day, eat mild foods such as crackers, and avoid spicy foods.
- Nausea or diarrhea: Ask your doctor about medications to help prevent or lessen these side effects.
- Mouth care is very important. Rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ teaspoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of water after every meal and at bedtime. Brush your teeth and gums often with soft toothbrush. (Soften it further by running it under warm water before brushing) Avoid smoking, alcohol, and mouthwashes that contain alcohol.

- Skin: Avoid sun exposure (including tanning beds). Wear SPF 30 (or higher) sun block that contains zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. Wear protective clothing such as hats, long sleeves, and long pants. Keep the area around any rash clean and dry. Check with your doctor before putting any products on your rash.
- If you begin to have hair loss, you may want to stop by the Resource Center (inside the Sunflower Café (cafeteria) on the 1st floor of the hospital) or call. **(716- 845-8659)** and talk about our wig and head covering program.
- Need to talk to someone who has been through the journey you are just beginning? The Resource Center also offers a Cancer Coach program, which matches patients with survivors who can provide practical and emotional support. (Coaches do not provide medical advice.)

When Should I  
Call the  
Doctor?

**Call your doctor immediately if you have:**

- any sign 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
- any sign of an allergic reaction: itching or hives, swelling in your face or hands, swelling or tingling in your mouth or throat, chest tightness, trouble breathing, dizziness, or palpitations
- unusual bruising or bleeding: bleeding lasts more than 10-15 minutes or that causes dizziness; black or bloody stools; vomit that is bloody or that looks like coffee grounds; blood in your urine or phlegm /mucus, unusually heavy menstrual bleeding, spontaneous bleeding from your gums or nose, or superficial bleeding into the skin that appears as a rash of pinpoint-sized reddish-purple spots (petechiae)

**Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have:**

- nausea, vomiting or painful mouth or throat that is not relieved by prescribed medication or that prevents you from eating or drinking
- diarrhea of four stools a day or diarrhea with weakness or lightheadedness
- swelling of the hands, feet, ankles, lower legs, or stomach

What Else

- Epirubicin may cause menstrual irregularities in women and interfere

Should I Know  
About  
Epirubicin?

with sperm production in men, causing sterility. Do NOT, however, assume you cannot get pregnant or father a child while on this medication. Use an effective method of birth control. Do not get pregnant during therapy as this drug may be harmful to the fetus.

- Speak with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children; ask for information on sperm or egg banking.
- Keep all appointments with your doctor and the laboratory.
- Epirubicin has been associated with the development of other types of cancer. Talk with your doctor about this risk.
- Epirubicin may cause severe heart damage months or up to 7-8 years after you have stopped taking the drug. There is a lifetime maximum dose you can receive of this medication. Your doctor will check your heart function before you begin this medication, and monitor you while you are receiving epirubicin.
- If you would like more information about epirubicin, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.