

# Ipilimumab

Names	The generic drug name is ipilimumab (ip'' i lim' ue mab). Yervoy® is the brand name. There may be other names for this medication.
How is Ipilimumab Administered?	This medication is given by infusion into a vein (intravenous or IV). It takes about 90 minutes to get one dose.
Why Am I Taking Ipilimumab?	Ipilimumab is approved to treat melanoma that cannot be removed with surgery or that has spread to other parts of the body (metastasized). It is also used to treat patients with renal cell cancer. If a drug has been approved for one purpose, doctors may decide to use the drug for other cancers if they believe it may be helpful.
How Does it Work?	<p>Ipilimumab is not a traditional chemotherapy medication; it is in a class of medications called monoclonal antibodies, a type of targeted therapy. Traditional chemotherapy drugs identify cancer cells by their rapid rate of reproduction, and then attack those cells. Unfortunately, there are cells in our bodies that normally reproduce rapidly and traditional chemotherapy drugs affect them too.</p> <p>Ipilimumab is designed to work differently. Instead of attacking rapidly reproducing cells, it activates your immune system. T-cells are a kind of white blood cell; they play a key role in your immune system. On T-cells are CTLAs – cytotoxic T-cell antigens – that recognize and destroy cancer cells. However, the T-cells also have a mechanism that inhibits the CTLAs from attacking cancer cells. Ipilimumab turns off this mechanism, and the CTLAs are free to destroy cancer cells.</p>
What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin Ipilimumab?	<p>Tell your doctor if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• have ever had an allergic reaction to ipilimumab</li><li>• have, or have ever had, an organ transplant, liver damage from illness or medication, or an autoimmune disease (Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, lupus, sarcoidosis, etc.)</li><li>• are taking medication that suppresses your immune system, such as oral steroids like prednisone, dexamethasone, etc.</li><li>• are pregnant or breastfeeding</li></ul>

**This drug may interact with other medications. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal or diet supplements that you take.**

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Fatigue/anemia
- Nausea, vomiting
- Diarrhea, constipation
- Itching, rash, and mouth sores
- Decreased appetite, abdominal pain, and constipation
- Fever, headache, and cough

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- Get plenty of rest and maintain good nutrition.
- If you have nausea, eat small, more frequent meals.
- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen nausea and headache.
- Check with your doctor before using any over-the-counter or herbal products for any symptom or side effect.
- Avoid exposing your skin to the sun. Wear sun block with an SPF of 30, long sleeve shirts, long pants, and a brimmed hat.
- If you get a rash, keep the area clean and dry and check with your doctor before using any creams or ointments on the area.
- Drink at least two to three quarts of fluid every 24 hours, unless your doctor gives you other instructions. Mouth care is very important. To minimize mouth problems, rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ tsp of baking soda in 8 oz of water after every meal and at bedtime. Brush your teeth and gums with a soft toothbrush. (Soften it further by running it under warm water). Floss your teeth gently.
- Avoid smoking, alcohol, and mouthwashes that contain alcohol.
- Do not use any tobacco products.
- Wash your hands often

When Should I Call the Doctor?

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

- any signs of allergic reaction: wheezing, chest tightness, itching, rash, dizziness, lightheadedness, palpitations, shortness of breath, or swelling of face, lips, tongue, or tongue
- any signs of infection: temperature of 100.5 F (38 C) or above, chills, sore throat, or frequent or burning urination.
- chest pain

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

- nausea, vomiting, or persistent or unusual headache that does not respond to prescribed medication
- easy bruising or bleeding, extreme fatigue

### What Else Should I Know About Ipilimumab?

- *Immune-mediated reaction* is very serious, but uncommon. It causes inflammation of an organ system. This reaction is most likely to occur during treatment but may occur weeks or months after treatment ended. Your doctor will order lab tests and monitor you. If you have any of the following symptoms, call your doctor **immediately**:
  - intestinal problems: bloody, black, or sticky stools; diarrhea; change in bowel habits; unexpected weight changes; or stomach pain or tenderness
  - liver problems: yellowing of the skin or eyes, persistent nausea or stomach pain, loss of appetite, dark urine, or pale stools
  - skin problems: red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin; rash; mouth sores or inflammation
  - nerve problems: unusual weakness in your hands, legs, or face; trouble gripping things or picking them up, dropping things, trouble walking, unsteady on your feet, difficulty getting up from a chair, tingling or numbness in hands or feet, trouble buttoning clothes, unusual weakness of the legs, arms, or face; burning, tingling, or numbness; muscle pain or weakness; stiff neck; changes in your mental status
  - eye problems: pain, redness, or vision changes
  - glandular problems: feeling unusually cold or hot all the time, persistent headaches, sluggishness, changes in mood or behavior such as decreased sex drive, irritability, or dizziness
- Keep all appointments with your doctor and the lab.
- Do not start any medications new medications unless your check with your oncologist first.
- Do not get any kind of immunization or vaccination unless you have your doctor's permission.
- Do not conceive or father a child while taking ipilimumab. Both men and women should use a barrier method of contraception. Ipilimumab can cause fatal harm to a fetus. Discuss with you doctor when you may safely become pregnant
- If you have any other questions about ipilimumab, please talk to your doctor or pharmacist.