

ERYTHROPOIETIN

Other names: Eprex®



Important note: The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

Why you are taking this medicine?

Erythropoietin is used to treat anaemia caused by:

- chronic kidney failure
- malignancy (cancer)

For example, in chronic kidney failure, erythropoietin production by the kidney is decreased which reduces the number of the red blood cells being produced. Red blood cells are responsible for carrying oxygen around the body. A shortage of erythropoietin can make you become anaemic.

Signs of anaemia can include:

- tiredness
- shortness of breath
- being cold

By injecting erythropoietin, this will improve your symptoms and quality of life. For example, your energy should increase. However, because it takes your body some time to make more red blood cells, it may take about four weeks before you notice any effect.

When to take this medicine

The dose is usually injected subcutaneously (just under the skin), one to three times a week. Inject as many times each week as your doctor tells you.

DO NOT STOP this medication without your doctor's permission.

If you miss a dose

Take your dose as soon as possible except when it is close to the time for your next dose. If it is almost time for next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular dosing schedule. You should not take two doses at the same time.

Side Effects

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

Call your doctor **immediately** if you have any of these side effects:

- irregular or fast heartbeat
- chest pain
- severe skin rash and itch
- wheezing or difficulty breathing
- swelling of face, hands and feet
- sudden stabbing migraine-like headache
- seizures

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if any of these side effects are of a concern to you:

- headache
- gastrointestinal (gut) upset – nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea
- general aches and pains, bone and muscular pain
- chills and fever, sweating
- rash
- visual disturbances

This list of side effects is **not** complete. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if any side effect is of a concern to you.

Other Medicines

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other medicine including herbal or complementary products and medicines you can buy without a prescription.

Prior to surgery of any kind tell your doctor or dentist that you are injecting erythropoietin.

Storage

Store erythropoietin in a fridge (2-8°C), but do not allow it to freeze. If erythropoietin freezes it will not work properly. Throw it out and use a fresh supply.

Keep all medicines out of reach of children.

Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist.

How to inject EPREX®

The pre-filled syringes are fitted with the PROTECS™ needle guard device to help prevent needle stick injuries after use. This is indicated on the packaging.

- **Take a syringe out of the refrigerator.** The liquid needs to come to room temperature. This usually takes between 15 to 30 minutes. Do not remove the syringe's needle cover while allowing it to reach room temperature.
- **Check the syringe,** to make sure it is the right dose, has not passed its expiry date, is not damaged, and the liquid is clear and not frozen.
- **Choose an injection site.** Good sites are the top of the thigh and around the tummy (abdomen) but away from the navel. Use a different place with each injection.
- **Wash your hands.** Use an antiseptic swab on the injection site, to disinfect it.
- **Hold the pre-filled syringe by the body of the syringe with the covered needle pointing upward.**
- **Do not hold by the plunger head, needle guard wings, or needle cover.**
- **Do not pull back on the plunger at any time.**
- **Do not remove the needle cover from the pre-filled syringe until you are ready to inject your EPREX.**
- **Take the cover off the syringe by holding the barrel and pulling the cover off carefully without twisting it.** Don't push the plunger, touch the needle or shake the syringe.
- **Pinch a fold of skin** between your thumb and index finger. Don't squeeze it.
- **Push the needle in fully.** Your doctor or nurse may have shown you how to do this.
- **Push the plunger with your thumb as far as it will go to inject all of the liquid.** Push it slowly and evenly, keeping the skinfold pinched. The PROTECS needle guard will not activate unless the entire dose is given. You may hear a click when the PROTECS needle guard has been activated.
- **When the plunger is pushed as far as it will go,** take out the needle and let go of the skin.
- **Slowly take your thumb off the plunger.** Allow the syringe to move up until the entire needle is covered by the needle guard.
- **When the needle is pulled out of your skin, there may be a little bleeding at the injection site.** This is normal. You can press an antiseptic swab over the injection site for a few seconds after the injection.
- **Dispose of your used syringe** in a safe container. Only take one dose of EPREX from each syringe. If any liquid remains in the syringe after an injection, the syringe should be properly disposed of, not reused. EPREX prefilled syringes do not contain preservatives. Therefore, once a syringe has been opened, any remaining solution must be discarded.

If you do not understand the instructions provided with this medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

This information has been adapted from the EPREX® consumer medicine information sheet.