



Interferon Alfa-2a and Alfa-2b Injection

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About your treatment

Your doctor has ordered interferon alfa-2a or alfa-2b to help treat your illness. This drug will be injected under the skin (subcutaneously) or into a muscle (intramuscularly).

This medication is given to prevent tumor cells or viruses from growing inside your body. It does not work for all patients, however, and some patients respond to the drug better than others. This medication is sometimes prescribed for other uses; ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

For the first 10-24 weeks, you will have a daily injection (the induction period). After that time, you will receive an injection three times a week (the maintenance period). Generally, therapy lasts for at least 6 months. This medication is sometimes prescribed for other uses; ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

Your health care provider (doctor, nurse, or pharmacist) may measure the effectiveness and side effects of your treatment using physical examinations and laboratory tests before and during your treatment. It is important to keep all appointments with your doctor and the laboratory. The length of treatment depends on how you respond to the medication.

Precautions

Before administering interferon alfa,

- tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to interferon alfa or any other drugs.
- tell your doctor and pharmacist what prescription and nonprescription medications you are taking, especially antibiotics and vitamins.
- tell your doctor if you have or have ever had heart, kidney or liver disease; asthma; depression; mental illness; or diabetes.
- tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding. If you become pregnant while taking interferon alfa, call your doctor.
- remember you should never change brands of interferon without telling your health care provider.

Administering your medication

Before you administer interferon alfa-2a or alfa-2b, look at the solution closely. It should be clear and free of floating material. Observe the solution container to make sure there are no leaks. Do not use the solution if it is discolored, if it contains particles, or if the container leaks. Use a new solution, but show the damaged one to your health care provider.

It is important that you use your medication exactly as directed. Do not change your dosing schedule without talking to your health care provider. Your health care provider may tell you to stop your infusion if you have a mechanical problem (such as a blockage in the tubing, needle, or catheter); if you have to stop an infusion, call your health care provider immediately so your therapy can continue.

Side effects

The most common side effect of interferon alfa-2a or alfa-2b therapy is a flu-like reaction with fever, fatigue, irritability, chills, headaches, and muscle aches. These effects should become less severe and less frequent as you continue your therapy. Tell your health care provider if any of these problems continue or worsen.

Tell your health care provider if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away:

- upset stomach
- loss of appetite
- stomach pain
- diarrhea
- skin rash
- dry skin
- itching

If you experience either of the following symptoms, call your health care provider immediately:

- dizziness
- numbness or tingling in the arms, hands, legs, or feet

If you experience a serious side effect, you or your doctor may send a report to the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program online [at <http://www.fda.gov/MedWatch/index.html>] or by phone [1-800-332-1088].

Storing your medication

- Your health care provider probably will give you several days supply of interferon alfa at a time. The drug comes either as a white to beige powder with a solution for mixing or as a colorless solution ready for use. All medications and solutions must be stored in the refrigerator.
- Take your next dose from the refrigerator 1 hour before using it; place it in a clean, dry area to allow it to warm to room temperature.
- Follow all directions provided by your health care provider for preparation of the drug. Let the solution warm to room temperature before administration. Do not use the medication if it has been out of the refrigerator for 24 hours or more or if it has been in the refrigerator longer than 30 days.
- Do not allow interferon alfa-2a or alfa 2b to freeze; do not shake the vials.

Store your medication only as directed. Make sure you understand what you need to store your medication properly.

Keep your supplies in a clean, dry place when you are not using them, and keep all medications and supplies out of reach of children. Your health care provider will tell you how to throw away used needles, syringes, tubing, and containers to avoid accidental injury.

In case of emergency/overdose

In case of overdose, call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call local emergency services at 911.

Signs of infection

If you are receiving interferon alfa under your skin, you need to know the symptoms of a catheter-related infection (an infection where the needle enters your skin). If you experience any of these effects near the infusion site, tell your health care provider as soon as possible:

- tenderness
- warmth
- irritation
- drainage
- redness
- swelling
- pain

Brand names

- Intron A (alfa-2b)
- Roferon-A (alfa-2a)

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