

A Patient's Guide to Eprex®

We are giving you Eprex® to help your body produce more red blood cells. This may help decrease your need for a blood transfusion.

What is Eprex®?

Eprex® is a man-made version of erythropoietin. In your body, your kidneys naturally produce erythropoietin when you have low oxygen levels. This substance helps your body make more red blood cells, which helps increase the amount of oxygen in your body.

What do you need to know about me before I am able to receive Eprex®?

Before we give you Eprex®, we will ask you about:

- Any drug allergies you may have. If you have a known allergy, we suggest you wear your MedicAlert® bracelet while in hospital.
- Medicines you are currently taking (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals)
- Any personal history of:
 - Heart problems
 - Uncontrolled high blood pressure
 - Stroke
 - Blood clots
 - Kidney problems
 - Seizures
 - Liver problems
 - Gout.

Where do I go for my Eprex® treatments?

We will give you Eprex® injections in Medical Daycare at Humber River Health. Another option is to arrange for your family doctor to give you the injections, if he/she agrees.

*Eprex must be refrigerated, but not frozen. It should be transported via cooler bag with an ice pack.

How do you give Eprex®?

We give Eprex® by needle just under the skin. Usually, we will give you one injection a week for 1 to 3 weeks.

Will I need any tests while I take Eprex®?

- We will take your blood pressure before we give you Eprex®. If your blood pressure is too high, we may postpone your Eprex® injection for that day.
- Your doctor may also order lab work during your treatment.

Is there anything else I need to do while taking Eprex®?

You will need to take an iron supplement while receiving Eprex®. In most cases, you will take the iron supplement by mouth (oral). In some cases, you may need intravenous (IV) iron, or both IV iron and oral iron.

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What are the side effects of Eprex®?

You may experience “flu-like symptoms” within 24 hours of receiving your injection.

These symptoms include:

- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Low-grade fever.

If these symptoms occur, you can treat them with “over-the-counter” (OTC) pain medicines (such as Tylenol®, Aspirin®, Ibuprofen®). Ask your pharmacist for advice on which medicine is best for you. For future injections, you can try to prevent your symptoms from occurring by taking the same OTC pain medicine one hour before each Eprex® injection.

Very rarely, Eprex® may cause very serious (possibly fatal) side effects, including:

- Seizures
- High blood pressure
- A blood clot
- Heart attack
- Stroke, or
- Heart failure.

Your doctor will only prescribe this medicine to you if they determine that the benefit to you is greater than the risk.

How do I pay for Eprex®?

Eprex® is available by prescription only. Your doctor will order it for you.

- If you have one, your private insurance may be able to cover some or all of the cost of Eprex®, depending on your plan.
- Ontario Drug Benefits and Trillium may also cover the cost of Eprex® using the “Exceptional Access Program.”

Tell your doctor or the person giving you Eprex® if you have:

- Shortness of breath
- A cough
- Chest pain
- Racing heartbeat
- Headache that does not go away after using OTC pain medicine
- Swelling or pain the groin or calf
- Weakness on one side of your body
- Sudden vision changes
- Light-headedness, fainting

Allergic reactions are very unlikely. However, tell your doctor or the person giving you Eprex® right away, if you:

- Have trouble breathing
- Have hives
- Feel itchy
- Have a rash
- Have swelling of your throat, face, mouth or tongue.

For more information, please contact:

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English: This information is important! If you have trouble reading this, ask someone to help you.

Italian: Queste informazioni sono importanti! Se ha difficoltà a leggere questo, chiedi aiuto a qualcuno.

Spanish: ¡Esta información es importante! Si tiene dificultad en leer esto, pida que alguien le ayude.