Erythropoietin (Eprex®)
Darbepoetin (Aranesp®)

PHARMACY INFO SHEET

WHAT IT DOES:

Erythropoietin (EPO) tells your bone marrow to make more red blood cells.

HOW IT WORKS:

Red blood cells carry oxygen from your lungs to your muscles and the other tissues. If your body is low in oxygen because there are not enough red blood cells, it tells your kidney to release EPO. EPO tells your bone marrow to make more red blood cells.

In kidney disease, your kidneys are not able to release EPO and therefore you will not make enough red blood cells. You will feel tired, weak and possibly short of breath.

Erythropoietin and Darbepoetin injections take the place of the EPO that your kidneys used to make and therefore your red blood cell count should increase. You will feel less tired when you have enough EPO. It is important that you not get too much, however, as it can cause your blood pressure to increase if overused.

HOW TO TAKE IT:

Your hemoglobin measurements determine how much EPO you need. This is the substance in red blood cells that is responsible for carrying oxygen. The usual goal for hemoglobin is 110 –125. If you have an intravenous access, EPO will likely be given intravenously but may also be given subcutaneously. Darbepoetin may be given intravenously or subcutaneously (under the skin).

WHAT TO DO IF YOU MISS A DOSE:

If you are to come in to the clinic to get the injection, it is important that you come at your regular time and not miss days. You will not feel well if you miss injections and the missed doses will not be "made up" by giving extra. If you need to miss a visit, please make arrangements with the clinic nurse for your injections.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS:

Side effects are uncommon with injections under the skin, but may include irritation at injection site, increase in blood pressure, headache, flu-like symptoms. These side effects may be more common if EPO is given into a vein.

RELATION TO DIET:

EPO is not in any foods. Making sure you have enough iron and folic acid will help your body use the EPO better.

Use the space below to write down why you are taking this medication.

Version: October 20, 2011

BC Renal Agency • Suite 700-1380 Burrard St. • Vancouver, BC • V6Z 2H3 • 604.875.7340 • BCRenalAgency.ca