

PRODUCT MONOGRAPH
INCLUDING PATIENT MEDICATION INFORMATION

PrAranesp®

darbepoetin alfa injection

SingleJect® Prefilled Syringes

(10, 15[‡], 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 80, 100, 130, 150, 200, 250[‡], 300, 400[‡], 500 mcg/syringe)

Single-use Vials[†]

(15, 60, 325 mcg/vial)

Subcutaneous Injection; Intravenous Injection

Professed Standard

Erythropoiesis Regulating Hormone

ATC Code: B03XA02

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[†] Single-use vial presentation is not available in Canada.

[‡] 15, 250, 400 mcg/syringe pre-filled syringes are not available in Canada.

RECENT MAJOR LABEL CHANGES

None.

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Sections or subsections that are not applicable at the time of authorization are not listed.

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PART I: HEALTH PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

1 INDICATIONS

Treatment of Anemia in Chronic Kidney Disease

- ARANESP® (darbepoetin alfa injection) is indicated for the treatment of anemia associated with chronic kidney disease (CKD), including patients on dialysis and patients not on dialysis.
 - Aranesp is not intended for patients who require immediate correction of severe anemia or emergency transfusions.
 - Aranesp is not indicated for other causes of anemia such as iron or folate deficiencies, hemolysis, or gastrointestinal bleeding which should be managed appropriately.

Treatment of Anemia due to Chemotherapy in Patients with Non-Myeloid Malignancies

- Aranesp is indicated for the treatment of anemia due to the effect of concomitantly administered myelosuppressive chemotherapy in adult patients with advanced or metastatic, non-myeloid malignancies.
 - In patients with a long life expectancy, the decision to administer erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs) should be based on a benefit-risk assessment with the participation of the individual patient. This should take into account the specific clinical context such as (but not limited to) the type of tumour and its stage, the degree of anemia, life expectancy, the environment in which the patient is being treated and known risks of transfusions and ESAs.
 - If appropriate, red blood cell transfusion should be the preferred treatment for the management of anemia in patients with a long life expectancy and who are receiving myelosuppressive chemotherapy.

1.1 Pediatrics

Pediatrics (< 18 years of age): No data are available to Health Canada; therefore, Health Canada has not authorized an indication for pediatric use.

1.2 Geriatrics

Geriatrics (≥ 65 years of age):

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients: The results of clinical trials with Aranesp suggest no increased safety risk with increasing age.

Cancer Patients: No overall differences in safety or efficacy were observed between these patients and younger patients.

See [7.1.4 Geriatrics](#).

2 CONTRAINDICATIONS

Aranesp is contraindicated in patients:

- with uncontrolled hypertension
- who develop Pure Red Cell Aplasia (PRCA) following treatment with any ESAs

- with sensitivity to mammalian cell-derived products
- with known hypersensitivity to this drug or to any ingredient in the formulation, including any non-medicinal ingredient, or component of the container. For a complete listing, see [6 DOSAGE FORMS, STRENGTHS, COMPOSITION AND PACKAGING](#).

3 SERIOUS WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS BOX

Serious Warnings and Precautions

All Patients

- To minimize the risks for death, serious adverse cardiovascular reactions, and stroke, follow the recommended dosage for each indication for Aranesp and other erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs) (see [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS, Increased Mortality, Serious Adverse Cardiovascular Reactions, Thromboembolic Events and Stroke](#), and [4 DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION](#)).
- Patients with uncontrolled hypertension should not be treated with Aranesp; blood pressure should be adequately controlled before initiation of therapy with Aranesp.
- Aranesp should be used with caution in patients with a history of seizures.
- Antibody-mediated Pure Red Cell Aplasia (PRCA) has been reported after months to years of treatment with ESAs.

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

- In controlled trials, patients experienced greater risks for death, serious adverse cardiovascular reactions, and stroke when administered ESAs to target hemoglobin levels of 130 g/L and above. Individualize dosing to achieve and maintain hemoglobin levels within the range of 100 to 115 g/L, not to exceed 120 g/L.

Cancer Patients

- ESAs increased the risks for death, serious adverse cardiovascular reactions and thromboembolic events in some controlled clinical trials.
- ESAs shortened overall survival and/or increased the risk of tumour progression or recurrence in some clinical studies in patients with breast, head and neck, lymphoid, cervical and non-small cell lung cancers when dosed to target a hemoglobin level of ≥ 120 g/L.
- To minimize the above risks, use the lowest dose needed to avoid red blood cell (RBC) transfusions.
- Use ESAs only for treatment of anemia due to concomitant myelosuppressive chemotherapy. Aranesp is not indicated for use in patients receiving hormonal agents, therapeutic biologic products, or radiotherapy unless receiving concomitant myelosuppressive chemotherapy.
- If appropriate, red blood cell transfusion should be the preferred treatment for the management of anemia in patients with a long-life expectancy and who are receiving myelosuppressive chemotherapy.
- Discontinue Aranesp following the completion of a chemotherapy course.

4 DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION

4.1 Dosing Considerations

IMPORTANT: See [3 SERIOUS WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS BOX](#) and [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS: Increased Mortality, Serious Adverse Cardiovascular Reactions, Thromboembolic Events and Stroke](#). Aranesp dosing regimens are different for each of the indications described in the [1 INDICATIONS](#) section of this Product Monograph. Aranesp should be administered under the supervision of a healthcare professional. Due to the longer serum half-life, Aranesp should be administered less frequently than Epoetin alfa (for example, where Epoetin alfa is administered three times a week, Aranesp should be administered weekly). When changing the route of administration, the same dose should be used and the hemoglobin monitored so that the appropriate dose adjustments can be made to keep the hemoglobin at the desired concentration.

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

The dose should be started and slowly adjusted, as described in Section [4.2 Recommended Dose and Dosage Adjustment](#), based on hemoglobin levels. If a patient fails to respond or maintain a response, other etiologies should be considered and evaluated (see [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS, Monitoring and Laboratory Tests](#); Lack or Loss of Response to Aranesp, Pure Red Cell Aplasia).

It should be recognized that subcutaneous administration of recombinant human proteins may increase the risk of immunogenicity. In patients on hemodialysis, the IV route is recommended.

Correction of Anemia in Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

The treatment of anemia in chronic renal failure patients should be individualized. The choice of the treatment modality (iron, erythropoiesis-stimulating agent, blood transfusion) and of the amount of therapeutic product administered should take into consideration the overall condition and treatment plan for the patient (e.g., presence of concomitant conditions, risk factors, plan for renal transplant, etc.) as well as national guidelines. ESA therapy should only be initiated if hemoglobin is less than 100 g/L.

Conversion to Aranesp from Recombinant Human Erythropoietin in CKD Patients

The clinical studies demonstrated that the relationship between baseline rHuEPO and maintenance Aranesp is nonlinear across the dosing spectrum. Consequently, the starting weekly dose of Aranesp should be estimated on the basis of the weekly Epoetin alfa dose at the time of substitution (see [Table 1](#)). Due to the longer serum half-life, Aranesp should be administered less frequently than rHuEPO. Patients receiving rHuEPO 2 or 3 times weekly should change to once weekly Aranesp at a dose equivalent to their total weekly dose of rHuEPO. Patients receiving rHuEPO once per week should change to Aranesp once every 2 weeks at a dose that is equivalent to the sum of 2 weekly doses of rHuEPO. The same route of administration should be used. For patients prescribed prefilled syringes the calculated dose should be rounded upward to the next available syringe strength.

Table 1. Estimated Aranesp Starting Dose (mcg/week) Based on Previous Epoetin alfa Dose (Units/week) for CKD Patients

Previous Weekly Epoetin alfa Dose (CKD Patients) (Units/week)	Weekly Aranesp Dose (CKD Patients) (mcg/week)
< 2,500	6.25
2,500 to 4,999	12.5
5,000 to 10,999	25
11,000 to 17,999	40
18,000 to 33,999	60
34,000 to 89,999	100
≥ 90,000	200

Patients should be carefully monitored to ensure appropriate dose adjustments in order to maintain appropriate hemoglobin levels (see [4.2 Recommended Dose and Dosage Adjustment](#), Dose Adjustment for Chronic Kidney Disease Patients).

Data from approximately 800 patients receiving Aranesp in clinical studies were analyzed to assess the dose required to maintain hemoglobin; no difference was observed between the average weekly dose administered by the IV or SC routes of administration.

Because of intersubject variability, titration to the optimal therapeutic Aranesp dose is required for individual patients. When a patient's hemoglobin is stabilized within the recommended range it should be monitored monthly and adjustments made as described below (see [4.2 Recommended Dose and Dosage Adjustment](#), Dose Adjustment for Chronic Kidney Disease Patients).

Cancer Patients Receiving Chemotherapy

Aranesp should not be initiated at hemoglobin levels ≥ 100 g/L.

4.2 Recommended Dose and Dosage Adjustment

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

Aranesp is administered either IV or SC as a single injection administered weekly or once every two weeks. When Aranesp therapy is initiated or adjusted, the hemoglobin should be followed weekly until stabilized and monitored at least monthly thereafter.

For patients who respond to Aranesp with a rapid increase in hemoglobin (e.g., more than 10 g/L in any 2-week period), the dose of Aranesp should be reduced (see [4.2 Recommended Dose and Dosage Adjustment](#), Dose Adjustment for Chronic Kidney Disease Patients) because of the association of excessive rate of rise of hemoglobin with adverse events (see [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS, Increased Mortality, Serious Adverse Cardiovascular Reactions, Thromboembolic Events and Stroke](#)).

Health Canada has not authorized an indication for pediatric use.

Correction of Anemia in Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

The recommended starting dose of Aranesp for the correction of anemia in CKD patients is 0.45 mcg/kg body weight, administered as a single IV or SC injection once weekly. Doses should be titrated to achieve and maintain the hemoglobin within the recommended range of 100 to 115 g/L, not to exceed 120 g/L. If hemoglobin excursions outside the recommended range occur, Aranesp dose should be adjusted using the dosing recommendations below (see [4.2 Recommended Dose and Dosage Adjustment](#), Dose Adjustment for Chronic Kidney Disease Patients). For many patients, the appropriate maintenance dose will be lower than this starting dose. CKD patients not receiving dialysis, in particular, may require lower maintenance doses. Also, some patients have been treated successfully with a SC dose of Aranesp administered once every 2 weeks.

Dose Adjustment for Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

The dose of Aranesp should be individualized to achieve and maintain the hemoglobin within the recommended range of 100 to 115 g/L, not to exceed 120 g/L. If hemoglobin excursions outside the recommended range occur, Aranesp dose should be adjusted using the dosing recommendations below.

Because of the time required for erythropoiesis and the red cell half-life, an interval of 2 to 6 weeks may occur between the time of a dose adjustment and a significant change in hemoglobin. Increases in dose should not be made more frequently than once a month. If the hemoglobin is increasing and approaching 120 g/L, the dose should be reduced by approximately 25%. If after a dose reduction, the hemoglobin continues to increase, or if the hemoglobin is 120 g/L or above, the dose should be temporarily withheld until the hemoglobin begins to decrease, at which point therapy should be reinitiated at a dose approximately 25% below the previous dose. If the hemoglobin increases by more than 10 g/L in a 2-week period, the dose should be decreased by approximately 25%.

After Aranesp initiation or dose increase, if the increase in hemoglobin is less than 10 g/L over 4 weeks and iron stores are adequate (see [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS](#), Hematologic), the dose of Aranesp may be increased by approximately 25% of the previous dose. Further increases may be made at 4-week intervals until the desired response is attained.

For patients whose hemoglobin does not attain a level within the range of 100 to 120 g/L despite the use of appropriate Aranesp dose titrations over a 12-week period:

- do not administer higher Aranesp doses and use the lowest dose that will maintain a hemoglobin level sufficient to avoid the need for recurrent RBC transfusions,
- evaluate and treat for other causes of anemia (see [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS](#), [Increased Mortality](#), [Serious Adverse Cardiovascular Reactions](#), [Thromboembolic Events and Stroke](#)), and
- thereafter, hemoglobin should continue to be monitored and if responsiveness improves, Aranesp dose adjustments should be made as described above; use caution when increasing the dose for patients with lack or loss of response, discontinue Aranesp if responsiveness does not improve and the patient needs recurrent RBC transfusions.

Maintenance Dose for Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

Aranesp dosage should be individualized to maintain the hemoglobin within the recommended range of 100 to 115 g/L, not to exceed 120 g/L. If hemoglobin excursions outside the recommended range occur, Aranesp dose should be adjusted using the dosing recommendations above. If the hemoglobin exceeds 120 g/L, the dose should be temporarily withheld until the Hb has decreased to within the recommended range. Doses must be individualized to ensure that hemoglobin is maintained at an appropriate level for each patient.

Cancer Patients Receiving Chemotherapy

Aranesp should not be initiated at hemoglobin levels ≥ 100 g/L. Two dosing regimens may be used in adults; 500 mcg SC once every 3 weeks or 2.25 mcg/kg SC once weekly. Aranesp administration should be discontinued following the completion of a chemotherapy course.

Discontinue Aranesp if after 8 weeks of therapy there is no response as measured by increased hemoglobin levels or decreased need for RBC transfusions.

Health Canada has not authorized an indication for pediatric use.

Once-Every-Three-Week (Q3W) Dosing

The recommended starting dose for Aranesp administered once every 3 weeks is 500 mcg as a SC injection.

The dose should be adjusted for each patient to maintain the lowest hemoglobin level sufficient to avoid the need for RBC transfusion and not to exceed 120 g/L. Hemoglobin levels should be monitored, prior to dosing, at least every 3 weeks until the lowest level sufficient to avoid the need for RBC transfusion is reached and thereafter.

Doses of Aranesp should be decreased by approximately 40% (e.g., 300 mcg once every 3 weeks) when the hemoglobin reaches a level needed to avoid red blood cell transfusion or increases by more than 10 g/L in a 2-week period or 15 g/L in any 3-week period. If the hemoglobin exceeds a level needed to avoid transfusion, Aranesp should be temporarily withheld until the hemoglobin approaches a level where RBC transfusions may be required. At this point, therapy should be reinitiated at a dose 40% below the previous dose (e.g., 300 mcg once every 3 weeks).

Once-Weekly Dosing

The recommended starting dose of Aranesp administered weekly is 2.25 mcg/kg as a SC injection. The dose should be adjusted for each patient to maintain the lowest hemoglobin level sufficient to avoid the need for RBC transfusion and not to exceed 120 g/L.

If the increase in hemoglobin is inadequate (≤ 10 g/L) or if the response is not satisfactory in terms of reducing RBC transfusion requirements after approximately 6 weeks of therapy, the dose of Aranesp should be increased up to 4.5 mcg/kg/week. For patients prescribed prefilled syringes the calculated dose should be rounded upward to the next available syringe strength.

Hemoglobin levels should be monitored, prior to dosing, on a weekly basis until the lowest level sufficient to avoid the need for RBC transfusion is reached, and every 3 weeks thereafter. Doses of Aranesp should be decreased by 40% as the hemoglobin reaches a level needed to avoid RBC transfusion or the rate of hemoglobin increase is more than 10 g/L in a 2-week period or 15 g/L in a 3-week period. If the hemoglobin exceeds a level needed to avoid RBC transfusion, doses should be temporarily withheld until the hemoglobin approaches a level

where RBC transfusions may be required. At this point, therapy should be reinitiated at a dose 40% below the previous dose.

4.3 Reconstitution

Not applicable.

4.4 Administration

Information for Patients

In those situations in which the physician determines that a patient can safely and effectively self-administer Aranesp, the patient should be instructed as to the proper dosage and administration technique. Patients should be referred to the “PATIENT MEDICATION INFORMATION” section of the monograph. This is intended as a guide for patients; however, it is not a disclosure of all possible side effects. Patients should be informed of the signs and symptoms of allergic drug reactions and advised of appropriate actions.

If home use is prescribed for a patient, the patient should be thoroughly instructed in the importance of proper disposal of syringes and cautioned against the reuse of needles and syringes, or drug product. A puncture-resistant container for the disposal of used syringes and needles should be available to the patient. The full container should be disposed of according to the directions provided by the healthcare professional.

5 OVERDOSAGE

If overdose occurs, the patient’s hemoglobin, blood pressure, and any premonitory neurologic symptoms should be carefully monitored.

The maximum amount of Aranesp (darbepoetin alfa) that can be safely administered in single or multiple doses has not been determined. Therapy with Aranesp can result in polycythemia if the hemoglobin is not carefully monitored and the dose appropriately adjusted. Severe hypertension (including hypertensive crisis and malignant hypertension) has been observed following overdose with Aranesp (see [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS, Cardiovascular, Hypertension](#)). If the recommended hemoglobin range is exceeded, Aranesp should be temporarily withheld until the hemoglobin returns to the recommended range; Aranesp therapy may then be resumed using a lower dose (see [4 DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION](#)). If clinically indicated, phlebotomy may be performed.

For management of a suspected drug overdose, contact your regional poison control centre.

6 DOSAGE FORMS, STRENGTHS, COMPOSITION AND PACKAGING

To help ensure the traceability of biologic products, including biosimilars, health professionals should recognize the importance of recording both the brand name and the non-proprietary (active ingredient) name as well as other product-specific identifiers such as the Drug Identification Number (DIN) and the batch/lot number of the product supplied.

Table 2. Dosage Forms, Strengths, Composition and Packaging

Route of Administration	Dosage Form / Strength/Composition	Non-medicinal Ingredients
Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD): subcutaneous (SC) or intravenous (IV) Cancer: subcutaneous	Pre-filled Syringes: 10, 15 [†] , 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 80, 100, 130, 150, 200, 250 [‡] , 300, 400 [‡] , 500 mcg/syringe Liquid in Vials[†]: 15, 60, 325 mcg/vial	Polysorbate 80, Sodium Chloride, Sodium Phosphate Dibasic Anhydrous, Sodium Phosphate Monobasic Monohydrate and water for injection

[†] Single-use vial presentation is not available in Canada.

[‡] 15, 250, 400 mcg/syringe pre-filled syringes are not available in Canada.

Aranesp does not contain any preservatives.

Dosage Forms

The following dosage forms are available for Aranesp:

Table 3. SingleJect[®] Prefilled Syringes

Quantity of Aranesp	Volume	Aranesp Concentration
10 mcg	0.4 mL	25 mcg/mL
15 mcg [‡]	0.38 mL	40 mcg/mL
20 mcg	0.5 mL	40 mcg/mL
30 mcg	0.3 mL	100 mcg/mL
40 mcg	0.4 mL	100 mcg/mL
50 mcg	0.5 mL	100 mcg/mL
60 mcg	0.3 mL	200 mcg/mL
80 mcg	0.4 mL	200 mcg/mL
100 mcg	0.5 mL	200 mcg/mL
130 mcg	0.65 mL	200 mcg/mL
150 mcg	0.3 mL	500 mcg/mL
200 mcg	0.4 mL	500 mcg/mL
250 mcg [‡]	0.5 mL	500 mcg/mL
300 mcg	0.6 mL	500 mcg/mL
400 mcg [‡]	0.8 mL	500 mcg/mL
500 mcg	1.0 mL	500 mcg/mL

[‡]15, 250, 400 mcg/syringe pre-filled syringes are not available in Canada.

To reduce the risk of accidental needle sticks to users, each prefilled syringe is equipped with an UltraSafe[®] Needle Guard that is manually activated to cover the needle during disposal.

The needle cover of the pre-filled syringe contains dry natural rubber (a derivative of latex).

Table 4. Single-dose Vials[†]

Quantity of Aranesp	Volume	Aranesp Concentration
15 mcg	1.0 mL	15 mcg/mL
60 mcg	1.0 mL	60 mcg/mL
325 mcg	1.0 mL	325 mcg/mL

[†] Single-dose vial presentation is not available in Canada.

7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS

Please see [3 SERIOUS WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS BOX](#).

Carcinogenesis and Mutagenesis

See [16 NON-CLINICAL TOXICOLOGY](#).

Cardiovascular

Hypertension

Patients with uncontrolled hypertension should not be treated with Aranesp; blood pressure should be controlled adequately before initiation of therapy. Blood pressure may rise during treatment of anemia with Aranesp or rHuEPO. In Aranesp CKD clinical trials, approximately 40% of patients required initiation or intensification of antihypertensive therapy during the early phase of treatment when the hemoglobin was increasing. Hypertensive encephalopathy and seizures have been observed in patients with CKD treated with Aranesp or rHuEPO.

Special care should be taken to closely monitor and control blood pressure in patients treated with Aranesp. During Aranesp therapy, patients should be advised of the importance of compliance with antihypertensive therapy and dietary restrictions. If blood pressure is difficult to control by pharmacologic or dietary measures, the dose of Aranesp should be reduced or withheld (see [4.2 Recommended Dose and Dosage Adjustment](#), Dose Adjustment for Chronic Kidney Disease Patients). A clinically significant decrease in hemoglobin may not be observed for several weeks.

Increased Mortality, Serious Adverse Cardiovascular Reactions, Thromboembolic Events and Stroke

Patients with chronic kidney disease experienced greater risks for death, serious adverse cardiovascular reactions and stroke when administered ESAs to target hemoglobin levels of 130 g/L and above in clinical studies. No trial has identified a hemoglobin target level, dose or dosing strategy that does not increase these risks. Patients with chronic kidney disease and an insufficient hemoglobin response to ESA therapy may be at even greater risk for adverse cardiovascular reactions and mortality than other patients. Serious adverse cardiovascular reactions included myocardial infarction, stroke, congestive heart failure, and an increased risk of serious arterial and venous thromboembolic events including hemodialysis vascular access thrombosis. A rate of hemoglobin rise of > 10 g/L over 2 weeks may contribute to these risks (see [14 CLINICAL TRIALS](#), Chronic Kidney Disease Patients, Increased Mortality, Serious Adverse Cardiovascular Reactions, Thromboembolic Events and Stroke). Aranesp and other ESAs increased the risks for death and serious adverse cardiovascular reactions and thromboembolic events in some controlled clinical trials of patients with cancer. A rate of hemoglobin rise of > 10 g/L over 2 weeks may contribute to these risks.

CKD patients with hypo-responsiveness to ESAs may be at an increased risk for mortality and adverse cardiovascular reactions. These patients should be evaluated for treatable conditions (see [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS](#), Lack or Loss of Response to Aranesp and [4.2 Recommended Dose and Dosage Adjustment](#), Dose Adjustment for Chronic Kidney Disease Patients). These risks should be carefully weighed against the benefit to be derived from treatment with ESAs, particularly in cancer patients with increased risk factors of thrombotic events, such as patients with a prior history of thrombovascular events (TVEs) (e.g., deep venous thrombosis or pulmonary embolism) (see [14 CLINICAL TRIALS](#) and [4 DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION](#), Chronic Kidney Disease Patients; Cancer Patients Receiving Chemotherapy).

To minimize the risks for death and serious adverse cardiovascular reactions, follow the recommended dosage for each indication for Aranesp and other ESAs. For CKD patients, individualize dosing to achieve and maintain hemoglobin levels within the recommended range of 100 to 115 g/L, not to exceed 120 g/L. For patients with cancer, use the lowest dose sufficient to avoid blood transfusions. The rate of hemoglobin increase should not exceed 10 g/L in any 2 week period (see [4 DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION](#)).

An increased incidence of thromboembolic events has been observed in patients treated with erythropoietic agents. The anticipated benefits of Aranesp must be weighed against the potential for increased risks associated with therapy in the following populations: patients at risk for thrombosis; patients with pre-existing vascular disease; and in those patients with a known intolerance to antithrombotic agents.

An increased incidence of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) in patients receiving ESAs and undergoing surgical orthopedic procedures has been observed. Increased mortality was observed in patients receiving ESAs who were undergoing coronary artery bypass surgery. Aranesp is not authorized for reduction in allogeneic RBC transfusions in patients scheduled for surgical procedures.

Driving and Operating Machinery

See [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS](#), Neurologic.

Hematologic

The safety and efficacy of Aranesp (darbepoetin alfa) therapy has not been established in patients with underlying hematologic diseases (e.g., hemolytic anemia, sickle cell anemia, thalassemia, porphyria).

In order to ensure effective erythropoiesis, iron status should be evaluated for all patients before and during treatment as the majority of patients will eventually require supplemental iron therapy. Supplemental iron therapy is recommended for all patients whose serum ferritin is below 100 mcg/L or serum transferrin saturation is below 20%.

Immune

Pure Red Cell Aplasia

Cases of pure red cell aplasia (PRCA) and of severe anemia, with or without other cytopenias, associated with neutralizing antibodies to erythropoietin have been reported in patients treated with Aranesp. This has been reported predominantly in CKD patients receiving Aranesp by subcutaneous administration. For additional information on the use of ESAs and PRCA reactions in non-CKD patients, see [8.5 Post-Market Adverse Reactions](#).

Any patient who develops a sudden loss of response to Aranesp, accompanied by severe anemia and low reticulocyte count should be evaluated for the etiology of loss of effect, including the presence of neutralizing antibodies to erythropoietin. If anti-erythropoietin antibody-associated anemia is suspected, withhold Aranesp and other ESAs. Contact Amgen Canada (1-866-502-6436) to perform assays for binding and neutralizing antibodies. Aranesp should be permanently discontinued in patients with antibody-mediated anemia. Patients should not be switched to other ESAs as antibodies may cross react (see [14.3 Immunogenicity](#)).

Suspected cases of PRCA in association with Aranesp should be reported to Amgen who may assist in this evaluation.

Lack or Loss of Response to Aranesp

A lack of response or failure to maintain a hemoglobin response with Aranesp (darbepoetin alfa) doses within the recommended dosing range should prompt a search for causative factors. Deficiencies of iron, folic acid, or vitamin B₁₂ should be excluded or corrected. Depending on the clinical setting, intercurrent infections, inflammatory or malignant processes, osteofibrosis cystica, occult blood loss, severe aluminum toxicity, bone marrow fibrosis, insufficient dialysis and malnutrition may compromise an erythropoietic response.

If patients are hyporesponsive, or fail to respond to other erythropoietic agents, Pure Red Cell Aplasia (PRCA) or anti-erythropoietin antibody formation should be excluded. Patients with confirmed antibody-mediated PRCA should not be switched to Aranesp. See [4.2 Recommended Dose and Dosage Adjustment](#), Dose Adjustment for Chronic Kidney Disease Patients for the management of patients with an insufficient hemoglobin response to Aranesp therapy.

Monitoring and Laboratory Tests

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

In order to avoid an excessive rate of rise or exceeding the recommended hemoglobin range of 100 to 115 g/L, not to exceed 120 g/L, the guidelines for dose and frequency of dose adjustments should be followed. After initiation of Aranesp therapy, the hemoglobin should be determined weekly until it has stabilized and the maintenance dose has been established (see [4 DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION](#), Chronic Kidney Disease Patients). After a dose adjustment, the hemoglobin should be determined weekly for at least 4 weeks until it has been determined that the hemoglobin has stabilized in response to the dose change. The hemoglobin should then be monitored at regular intervals.

In order to ensure effective erythropoiesis, iron status should be evaluated for all patients before and during treatment, as the majority of patients will eventually require supplemental iron therapy. Supplemental iron therapy is recommended for all patients whose serum ferritin is below 100 mcg/L or whose serum transferrin saturation is below 20%.

Cancer Patients

The hemoglobin concentration after initiation of Aranesp therapy should be monitored at regular intervals to assess the need to modify dose based on the individual patient's response (see [4 DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION](#), Cancer Patients Receiving Chemotherapy).

Neurologic

Seizures

Use with caution in patients with a history of seizures. Seizures have occurred in patients participating in clinical trials of Aranesp and rHuEPO. During the first several months of therapy, blood pressure and the presence of premonitory neurologic symptoms should be monitored closely. Patients should be cautioned to avoid potentially hazardous activities such as driving heavy machinery during this period. While the relationship between seizures and the rate of rise of hemoglobin is uncertain, it is recommended that the dose of Aranesp be decreased if the hemoglobin increase exceeds 10 g/L in any 2-week period in CKD patients or 15 g/L in any 3-week period in cancer patients.

Reproductive Health: Female and Male Potential

No data are available from human studies with regard to impairment of fertility (see [16 NON-CLINICAL TOXICOLOGY](#)).

Sensitivity/Resistance

There have been reports of serious allergic reactions including anaphylactic reaction, angioedema, skin rash, urticaria and allergic bronchospasm associated with Aranesp. Symptoms have recurred with rechallenge, suggesting a causal relationship exists in some instances. If a serious allergic or an anaphylactic reaction occurs, appropriate therapy should be administered and Aranesp should be immediately and permanently discontinued.

Skin

Severe Cutaneous Reactions

Blistering and skin exfoliation reactions including Erythema multiforme and Stevens-Johnson Syndrome (SJS)/Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TEN), have been reported in a small number of patients treated with Aranesp in the post-marketing environment. Discontinue Aranesp therapy immediately if a severe cutaneous reaction, such as SJS/TEN, is suspected. As it is not known whether this is a class effect of ESAs, no recommendation can be made about switching to another ESA.

7.1 Special Populations

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

Patients With CKD Not Requiring Dialysis

Patients with CKD not yet requiring dialysis (pre-dialysis patients) may require lower maintenance doses of Aranesp than patients receiving dialysis. Though CKD patients not receiving dialysis generally receive less frequent monitoring of blood pressure and laboratory parameters than dialysis patients, CKD patients not receiving dialysis may be more responsive to the effects of Aranesp, and require judicious monitoring of blood pressure and hemoglobin. Renal function and fluid and electrolyte balance should also be closely monitored.

Dialysis Management

Therapy with Aranesp results in an increase in the number of red blood cells (RBCs) and a decrease in plasma volume, which could reduce dialysis efficiency; patients who are marginally dialyzed may require adjustments in their dialysis prescription.

The importance of compliance with a prescribed diet should be reinforced. Notably hyperkalemia is not uncommon in this patient population.

Cancer Patients

Increased Mortality and/or Increased Risk of Tumour Progression or Recurrence

Erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs), when administered to target a hemoglobin level of > 120 g/L, shortened the time to tumour progression in patients with advanced head and neck cancer receiving radiation therapy. ESAs also shortened survival in patients with metastatic breast cancer and in patients with lymphoid malignancy receiving chemotherapy when administered to target a hemoglobin level \geq 120 g/L.

In addition, ESAs shortened survival in patients with non-small cell lung cancer and in a study enrolling patients with various malignancies who were not receiving chemotherapy or radiotherapy; in these two studies, ESAs were administered to target a hemoglobin level of \geq 120 g/L.

An increased risk of death was observed in a clinical study when ESAs were administered to target hemoglobin of 120 g/L in patients with active malignant disease who were not being treated with either chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Aranesp is not indicated for use in patients with cancer who have anemia that is not associated with chemotherapy (see [14 CLINICAL TRIALS](#), Cancer Patients, Tumour Progression, Increased Mortality and Thromboembolic Events).

In view of the above, where appropriate, red blood cell transfusion should be the preferred treatment for the management of anemia in patients with cancer. The decision to administer ESAs should be based on a benefit-risk assessment with the participation of the individual patient. This should take into account the specific clinical context such as (but not limited to) the type of tumour and its stage, the degree of anemia, life-expectancy, the environment in which the patient is being treated, and known risks of transfusions and ESAs.

Cancer Patients Not Receiving Myelosuppressive Chemotherapy.

Aranesp should not be used in patients receiving hormonal agents, therapeutic biologic products, or radiotherapy unless receiving concomitant myelosuppressive chemotherapy.

7.1.1 Pregnant Women

There are no adequate and well-controlled studies in pregnant women. Aranesp should be used during pregnancy only if the potential benefit justifies the potential risk to the fetus.

Reproductive studies in rats showed no significant placental transfer of Aranesp. Studies in rats and rabbits, in which Aranesp was administered during gestation, showed no evidence of direct embryotoxic, fetotoxic, or teratogenic properties at doses up to 40 times the human dose. The only adverse effect observed was a slight reduction in fetal weight, which was seen at doses causing exaggerated pharmacological effects in the dams. No treatment effects on uterine implantation were seen in either species.

7.1.2 Breast-feeding

It is not known whether Aranesp is excreted in human milk. Because many drugs are excreted in human milk, caution should be exercised when Aranesp is administered to a nursing woman.

7.1.3 Pediatrics

The safety and efficacy of Aranesp in pediatric patients has not been established.

7.1.4 Geriatrics

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

The results of clinical trials with Aranesp suggest no increased safety risk with increasing age. Of more than 1500 patients with CKD treated with Aranesp, 43% were 65 years of age or older. Of these geriatric patients, 35% were 75 years of age or older. Regardless of age, the administration of Aranesp, either IV or SC, resulted in a dose-dependent and sustained increase in hemoglobin. No differences in dose requirements between geriatric and younger adults were observed. No overall differences in safety or efficacy were observed between these subjects and younger subjects. A greater sensitivity in older patients cannot be ruled out.

Cancer Patients

Of the 873 cancer patients in clinical studies receiving Aranesp and concomitant chemotherapy, 45% were age 65 and over, while 14% were 75 and over. No overall differences in safety or efficacy were observed between these patients and younger patients.

8 ADVERSE REACTIONS

8.1 Adverse Reaction Overview

All Patients

Thrombotic/Vascular Events

The following thrombotic/vascular events have been reported in patients receiving ESAs (some with fatal outcomes): venous and arterial thromboses and embolism (such as deep venous thrombosis, arterial thrombosis, pulmonary emboli, aneurysms, retinal thrombosis, clotting of vascular access), cerebrovascular accidents (including cerebral infarction and cerebral hemorrhage) and transient ischemic attacks.

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

In all studies with CKD patients, the most frequently reported serious adverse reactions with Aranesp were vascular access thrombosis, congestive heart failure, sepsis, and cardiac arrhythmia. The most commonly reported adverse reactions were infection, hypertension, hypotension, myalgia, headache, and diarrhea (see [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS, Increased Mortality, Serious Adverse Cardiovascular Reactions, Thromboembolic Events and Stroke](#)). The most frequently reported adverse reactions resulting in clinical intervention (e.g., discontinuation of Aranesp, adjustment in dosage, or the need for concomitant medication to treat an adverse reaction symptom) were hypotension, hypertension, fever, myalgia, nausea, and chest pain.

Cancer Patients Receiving Chemotherapy

The most frequently reported serious adverse events included death, fever, pneumonia, dehydration, vomiting, and dyspnea. The most commonly reported adverse events were fatigue, edema, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and dyspnea (see [Table 7, 8.2 Clinical Trial Adverse Reactions](#)). The most commonly reported adverse reaction was injection site pain (see [Table 8, 8.2 Clinical Trial Adverse Reactions](#)).

8.2 Clinical Trial Adverse Reactions

Clinical trials are conducted under very specific conditions. The adverse reaction rates observed in the clinical trials; therefore, may not reflect the rates observed in practice and should not be compared to the rates in the clinical trials of another drug. Adverse reaction information from clinical trials may be useful in identifying and approximating rates of adverse drug reactions in real-world use.

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

The data described below reflect exposure to Aranesp in 1598 CKD patients, including 675 exposed for at least 6 months, of whom 185 were exposed for greater than 1 year. Aranesp was evaluated in active-controlled (n = 823) and uncontrolled studies (n = 775).

The rates of adverse events and association with Aranesp are best assessed in the results from studies in which Aranesp was used to stimulate erythropoiesis in patients anemic at study baseline (n = 348), and, in particular, the subset of these patients in randomized controlled trials (n = 276). Because there were no substantive differences in the rates of adverse reactions between these subpopulations, or between these subpopulations and the entire population of patients treated with Aranesp, data from all 1598 patients were pooled.

The population encompassed an age range from 18 to 91 years. Fifty-seven percent of the patients were male. The percentages of Caucasian, Black, Asian, and Hispanic patients were 83%, 11%, 3%, and 1%, respectively. The median weekly dose of Aranesp was 0.45 mcg/kg (25th, 75th percentiles: 0.29, 0.66 mcg/kg).

Some of the adverse events reported are typically associated with CKD, or recognized complications of dialysis, and may not necessarily be attributable to Aranesp therapy. No important differences in adverse event rates between treatment groups were observed in controlled studies in which patients received Aranesp or other ESAs.

The data in [Table 5](#) reflect those adverse events occurring in at least 5% of CKD patients treated with Aranesp.

Table 5. Adverse Events Occurring in ≥ 5% of CKD Patients

Event	CKD Patients Treated With Aranesp (n = 1598)
Application site	
Injection Site Pain	7%
Body as a whole	
Peripheral Edema	11%
Fatigue	9%
Fever	9%
Death	7%
Chest Pain, Unspecified	6%
Fluid Overload	6%
Access Infection	6%
Influenza-like Symptoms	6%
Access Hemorrhage	6%
Asthenia	5%
Cardiovascular	
Hypertension	23%
Hypotension	22%
Cardiac Arrhythmias/Cardiac Arrest	10%
Angina Pectoris/Cardiac Chest Pain	8%
Thrombosis Vascular Access	8%
Congestive Heart Failure	6%
CNS/PNS	
Headache	16%
Dizziness	8%

Table 5. Adverse Events Occurring in \geq 5% of CKD Patients

Event	CKD Patients Treated With Aranesp (n = 1598)
Gastrointestinal	
Diarrhea	16%
Vomiting	15%
Nausea	14%
Abdominal Pain	12%
Constipation	5%
Musculoskeletal	
Myalgia	21%
Arthralgia	11%
Limb Pain	10%
Back Pain	8%
Resistance mechanism	
Infection ^a	27%
Respiratory	
Upper Respiratory Infection	14%
Dyspnea	12%
Cough	10%
Bronchitis	6%
Skin and appendages	
Pruritus	8%

^a Infection includes sepsis, bacteremia, pneumonia, peritonitis, and abscess.

The incidence rates for other clinically significant events are shown in [Table 6](#).

Table 6. Percent Incidence of Other Clinically Significant Events in CKD Patients

Event	CKD Patients Treated With Aranesp (n = 1598)
Acute Myocardial Infarction	2%
Seizure	1%
Stroke	1%
Transient Ischemic Attack	1%

Vascular access thrombosis occurred in CKD clinical trials at an annualized rate of 0.22 events per patient year of Aranesp therapy. Rates of thrombotic events (e.g., vascular access thrombosis, venous thrombosis, and pulmonary emboli) with Aranesp therapy were similar to those observed with rHuEPO therapy in these trials.

Cancer Patients Receiving Chemotherapy

The data described below reflect the exposure to Aranesp in 873 cancer patients. Aranesp was evaluated in seven studies that were active-controlled and/or placebo-controlled studies of up to 6 months duration. The Aranesp-treated patient demographics were as follows: median age of 63 years (range of 20 to 91 years); 40% male; 88% Caucasian, 5% Hispanic, 4% Black, and 3% Asian. Over 90% of patients had locally advanced or metastatic cancer, with the remainder having early stage disease. Patients with solid tumours (e.g., lung, breast, colon, ovarian cancers), and lymphoproliferative malignancies (e.g., lymphoma, multiple myeloma) were enrolled in the clinical studies. All of the 873 Aranesp-treated subjects also received concomitant cyclic chemotherapy.

The most frequently reported serious adverse events included death (10%), fever (4%), pneumonia (3%), dehydration (3%), vomiting (2%), and dyspnea (2%). The most commonly reported adverse events were fatigue, edema, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and dyspnea (see [Table 7](#)). The most commonly reported adverse reaction was injection site pain (see [Table 8](#)).

Except for those events listed in [Table 7](#), the incidence of adverse events in clinical studies occurred at a similar rate compared with patients who received placebo and were generally consistent with the underlying disease and its treatment with chemotherapy. The most frequently reported events leading to discontinuation of Aranesp were progressive disease, death, discontinuation of the chemotherapy, asthenia, dyspnea, pneumonia, and gastrointestinal hemorrhage. No important differences in adverse event rates between treatment groups were observed in controlled studies in which patients received Aranesp or other ESAs.

Table 7. Adverse Events^a Occurring in ≥5% of Cancer Patients Receiving Chemotherapy

Event	All Aranesp (n = 873)	Placebo (n = 221)
Body as a whole		
Fatigue	33%	30%
Edema	21%	10%
Fever	19%	16%
CNS/PNS		
Dizziness	14%	8%
Headache	12%	9%
Gastrointestinal		
Diarrhea	22%	12%
Constipation	18%	17%
Metabolic / Nutrition		
Dehydration	5%	3%
Musculoskeletal		
Arthralgia	13%	6%
Myalgia	8%	5%
Skin and appendages		
Rash	7%	3%

^a An adverse event is defined as an event that presents during treatment but does not necessarily have a causal relationship to Aranesp.

Table 8. Adverse Reactions Occurring in ≥1% of Cancer Patients Receiving Chemotherapy

Event	Aranesp (N = 873)	Placebo (N = 221)
	n (%)	n (%)
Number of Patients with an Adverse Reaction ^a	98 (11)	14 (6)
Injection Site Pain	36 (4)	6 (3)

^a An adverse reaction is defined as an event determined to be causally related to treatment with Aranesp.

Table 9. Incidence of Other Clinically Significant Adverse Events in Patients Receiving Chemotherapy

Event	All Aranesp (n = 873)	Placebo (n = 221)
Hypertension	3.7%	3.2%
Seizures/Convulsions ^a	0.6%	0.5%
Thrombotic Events	6.2%	4.1%
Pulmonary Embolism	1.3%	0.0%
Thrombosis ^b	5.6%	4.1%

^a Seizures/Convulsions include the preferred terms: Convulsions, Convulsions Grand Mal, and Convulsions Local.

^b Thrombosis includes: Thrombophlebitis, Thrombophlebitis Deep, Thrombosis Venous, Thrombosis Venous Deep, Thromboembolism, and Thrombosis.

Once-every-3-week dosing in chemotherapy-treated patients was assessed in a 705 patient active-controlled, double-blind study with 4 months of Aranesp treatment. The incidence of adverse reactions was similar between subjects treated with Aranesp at the starting dose of 500 mcg once every 3 weeks and Aranesp at the starting dose of 2.25 mcg/kg/week.

Thrombotic Events and Adverse Cardiovascular Reactions

Overall, the incidence of thrombotic events was 6.2% for Aranesp and 4.1% for placebo. The following events were reported more frequently in Aranesp-treated patients than in placebo controls: pulmonary embolism, thromboembolism, thrombosis, and thrombophlebitis (deep and/or superficial). In addition, edema of any type was more frequently reported in Aranesp-treated (21%) patients than in patients who received placebo (10%) (see [Table 7](#)).

8.3 Less Common Clinical Trial Adverse Reactions

Adverse reactions occurring in less than 1% of cancer patients treated with Aranesp include the following events:

Application Site: injection site ecchymosis, injection site edema, injection site paresthesia, injection site rash, injection site reaction.

Body as a Whole: fever, pain, peripheral edema, rigors, allergic reaction, fatigue, malaise, chest pain.

CNS/PNS: headache, dizziness, insomnia, cerebrovascular disorder, hypertonia, hypoesthesia, peripheral neuropathy, paresthesia.

Cardiovascular: hypertension, hypotension.

Gastrointestinal: diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, constipation, abdominal pain, anorexia, dry mouth, dyspepsia, tongue edema, GI hemorrhage, oral moniliasis, mucositis.

Hematologic: ecchymosis, hematoma, thrombocytopenia.

Metabolic/Nutrition: hypomagnesemia.

Musculo-Skeletal: involuntary muscular contraction, skeletal pain, myalgia, limb pain, arthralgia, back pain, joint stiffness, muscle weakness.

Resistance Mechanism: Herpes Zoster, sepsis.

Respiratory: dyspnea, cough, pulmonary embolism, hemoptysis, rhinitis, sore throat.

Skin & Appendages: increased sweating, erythema, skin lesion, rash, pruritus, maculopapular rash, dry skin, skin ulceration.

Special Senses: parosmia, taste perversion.

Urinary Disorders: nocturia.

Vascular Disorders: deep venous thrombosis, thrombosis.

Vision Disorders: abnormal lacrimation, abnormal vision.

8.4 Abnormal Laboratory Findings: Hematologic, Clinical Chemistry and Other Quantitative Data

Clinical Trial Findings

N/A

Post-Market Findings

N/A

8.5 Post-Market Adverse Reactions

In the post-marketing experience, the following have been reported in patients treated with Aranesp:

- Very rare cases of PRCA associated with neutralizing anti-erythropoietin antibodies (see [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS, Pure Red Cell Aplasia](#))
- Convulsions/seizures
- Serious allergic reactions including anaphylactic reaction, angioedema, allergic bronchospasm, skin rash and urticaria
- Severe cutaneous reactions including blistering, skin exfoliation, erythema multiforme and SJS/TEN (see [7 WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS, Skin](#))

Cases of PRCA have been rarely reported in patients with hepatitis C treated with interferon and ribavirin, when ESAs are used concomitantly. ESAs are not approved for the management of anemia associated with hepatitis C.

9 DRUG INTERACTIONS

9.2 Drug Interactions Overview

No formal drug interaction studies of Aranesp with other medications commonly used in CKD or cancer patients have been performed.

9.3 Drug-Behavioural Interactions

Interactions with behaviour have not been established.

9.4 Drug-Drug Interactions

Interactions with other drugs have not been established.

9.5 Drug-Food Interactions

Interactions with food have not been established.

9.6 Drug-Herb Interactions

Interactions with herbal products have not been established.

9.7 Drug-Laboratory Test Interactions

Interactions with laboratory tests have not been established.

10 CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY

10.1 Mechanism of Action

Darbepoetin alfa is an erythropoiesis-stimulating agent produced in Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells by recombinant DNA technology.

Erythropoietin is a glycoprotein that is the primary regulator of erythropoiesis through specific interaction with the erythropoietin receptor on the erythroid progenitor cells in the bone marrow. The production of erythropoietin primarily occurs in and is regulated by the kidney in response to changes in tissue oxygenation. Hypoxia and anemia generally result in an increase in endogenous erythropoietin production, which in turn stimulates erythropoiesis.

Endogenous erythropoietin production is impaired in patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD) and EPO deficiency is the primary cause of their anemia. Darbepoetin alfa has been shown to stimulate erythropoiesis in anemic CKD patients resulting in the correction of anemia and maintenance of hemoglobin levels within a defined target range in patients not previously receiving rHuEPO. In patients previously maintained on rHuEPO who were switched to darbepoetin alfa, hemoglobin levels were maintained within a defined target range.

The etiology of anemia in cancer patients is multifactorial. Erythropoietin deficiency and a blunted response of erythroid progenitor cells to endogenous erythropoietin contribute significantly towards anemia in these patients. Darbepoetin alfa has been shown to stimulate erythropoiesis, resulting in increased hemoglobin levels and a reduced need for red blood cell (RBC) transfusions in cancer patients.

10.2 Pharmacodynamics

Darbepoetin alfa stimulates erythropoiesis by the same mechanism as the endogenous hormone. Treatment of anemia with Aranesp in CKD and cancer patients has been associated with a reduction in RBC transfusions. The final processed form is a 165-amino acid protein containing 5 N-linked oligosaccharide chains, whereas endogenous erythropoietin (EPO) or recombinant human erythropoietin (rHuEPO) contain only 3. Due to its increased carbohydrate content Aranesp has a longer terminal half-life than rHuEPO and consequently a greater *in vivo* activity. Despite these molecular changes, darbepoetin alfa and rHuEPO have identical modes of action and Aranesp retains the very narrow specificity for the erythropoietin receptor demonstrated by rHuEPO.

10.3 Pharmacokinetics

The pharmacokinetic properties of darbepoetin alfa have been studied in healthy adult subjects, adult and pediatric CKD patients, and adult cancer patients.

Research has determined that the sialic acid containing carbohydrate moieties of erythropoietin have a significant effect on serum clearance and that serum clearance is the primary determinant of *in vivo* activity.

Due to its increased sialic acid containing carbohydrate content, darbepoetin alfa has an approximately 3-fold longer terminal half-life than rHuEPO and consequently a greater *in vivo* activity when administered by either the subcutaneous (SC) or intravenous (IV) route.

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

Following IV administration to adult CKD patients, darbepoetin alfa serum concentration-time profiles are biphasic, with a distribution half-life of approximately 1.4 hours and mean terminal half-life of approximately 21 hours.

Following SC administration, the absorption is slow and rate-limiting, and the terminal half-life is 49 hours (range: 27 to 89 hours), which reflects the absorption half-life. The peak concentration occurs at 34 hours (range: 24 to 72 hours) post-SC administration in adult CKD patients, and bioavailability is approximately 37% (range: 30% to 50%).

The distribution of darbepoetin alfa in adult CKD patients is predominantly confined to the vascular space (approximately 60 mL/kg). The pharmacokinetic parameters indicate dose-linearity over the therapeutic dose range. With once weekly dosing, steady-state serum levels are achieved within 4 weeks with < 2-fold increase in peak concentration when compared to the initial dose. Accumulation was negligible following both IV and SC dosing over 1 year of treatment.

Cancer Patients

Following SC administration of 2.25 mcg/kg/week to adult cancer patients (n = 26), a mean peak concentration of 10.6 ng/mL (range: 1.23 to 25.2 ng/mL; SD: 5.93) was achieved at a mean time of 90.5 hours (range: 70.8 to 123 hours; SD 19.7). The data were consistent with dose-linear pharmacokinetics over a wide dose range (0.5 to 8.0 mcg/kg weekly and 3.0 to 9.0 mcg/kg every 2 weeks). Upon multiple dosing over 12 weeks (dosing every week or every 2 weeks), the pharmacokinetic properties did not change. The expected moderate increases (< 2-fold) in darbepoetin alfa serum concentrations upon multiple dosing were observed as steady state was approached. Accumulation was negligible across a wide range of doses at once weekly and once every 2 weeks dosing schedules. Although the accumulation potential of darbepoetin alfa is unknown for longer-term (i.e., > 12 weeks) treatment in cancer patients, the extent (< 2-fold) accumulation observed at 12 weeks was the same as that observed at 4 weeks.

Over the dose range of 4.5 to 15 mcg/kg administered on a once-every-3-week (Q3W) schedule to cancer patients receiving chemotherapy, darbepoetin alfa pharmacokinetics were approximately linear with respect to dose, and no evidence of accumulation was observed.

Following SC administration of 6.75 mcg/kg (equivalent to 500 mcg for a 74-kg patient) on a Q3W schedule to cancer patients, peak concentrations occurred at 71 hours (range: 28 to 120 hours), and a terminal half-life of 74 hours (range: 24 to 144 hours) was observed. No evidence of marked (> 2-fold) accumulation was observed upon Q3W SC dosing of 6.75 mcg/kg. Exposure to darbepoetin alfa when administered on a Q3W schedule (6.75 mcg/kg), either on the same day of chemotherapy or mid cycle was comparable, with mean AUC values differing by less than 28% between groups. Although approximately 30-70% differences in mean terminal half-life or peak concentration values were observed between groups, no clinically significant differences in efficacy or safety between groups was observed, suggesting limited clinical significance of the findings. Following IV or SC

administration of 4.5 mcg/kg on a Q3W schedule, mean trough or 1- to 2-week post-dose darbepoetin alfa serum levels were comparable between the IV and SC groups after multiple dosing.

Special Populations and Conditions

- **Pediatrics**

Following IV or SC administration in children 3 to 16 years old, the mean terminal half-life was 22 hours for IV administration (range: 12 to 30 hours) and 43 hours (range: 16 to 86 hours) for SC administration. The SC bioavailability was 54% (range: 32% to 70%).

Comparison of the limited data available for the pharmacokinetics of darbepoetin alfa in pediatric CKD patients with that of adults suggests that the disposition of darbepoetin alfa is similar in adult and pediatric subjects. However, following SC administration, darbepoetin alfa appears to be absorbed at a more rapid rate than compared with adults. Precaution need be noted, since additional study is required as this observation has not been thoroughly investigated.

- **Geriatrics**

The pharmacokinetic parameters estimated for adult subjects < 65 years old and ≥ 65 years old were similar, for both IV and SC dosing.

- **Renal Insufficiency**

As there is minimal renal excretion of intact darbepoetin alfa, alterations in renal function are not expected to affect its pharmacokinetics. Following SC dosing of darbepoetin alfa to healthy subjects peak concentration occurred 36 hours post dose and the terminal half-life was 60 hours (range: 28 to 144 hours) compared to 49 hours (range: 27 to 89 hours) in CKD patients.

11 STORAGE, STABILITY AND DISPOSAL

Store at 2°C to 8°C (36°F to 46°F). Do not freeze or shake. Protect from light. Do not use Aranesp beyond the expiry date shown on the label.

12 SPECIAL HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

N/A

PART II: SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION

13 PHARMACEUTICAL INFORMATION

Drug Substance

Proper name: darbepoetin alfa

Chemical name: Novel Erythropoiesis-Stimulating Agent

Molecular formula and molecular mass: 37.1 kd (based on known amino acid and carbohydrate structure)

Product Characteristics:

ARANESP® (darbepoetin alfa) is an erythropoiesis-stimulating agent produced in Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells by recombinant DNA technology. The final processed form is a 165-amino acid protein containing 5 N-linked oligosaccharide chains and 1 O-linked oligosaccharide chain. Aranesp has a molecular weight of 37.1 kd (based on known amino acid and carbohydrate structure).

14 CLINICAL TRIALS

14.1 Clinical Trials by Indication

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

The safety and effectiveness of Aranesp have been assessed in multicenter studies. Two studies evaluated the safety and efficacy of Aranesp for the correction of anemia in adult patients with CKD, 2 studies assessed the ability of Aranesp to maintain hemoglobin concentrations in adult patients with CKD who had been receiving other ESAs, and 2 studies assessed a manufacturing change.

De Novo Use of Aranesp

In two open-label studies, Aranesp or rHuEPO were administered for the correction of anemia in CKD patients who had not been receiving prior treatment with exogenous erythropoietin. Study 1 evaluated CKD patients receiving dialysis; Study 2 evaluated patients not requiring dialysis (predialysis patients). In both studies, the starting dose of Aranesp was 0.45 mcg/kg administered once weekly. The starting dose of rHuEPO was 50 U/kg 3 times weekly in Study 1 and 50 U/kg twice weekly in Study 2. When necessary, dosage adjustments were instituted to maintain hemoglobin in the study target range of 110 to 130 g/L (see [4 DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION](#), Chronic Kidney Disease Patients for recommended clinical hemoglobin target). The primary efficacy endpoint was the proportion of patients who experienced at least a 10 g/L increase in hemoglobin concentration to a level of at least 110 g/L by 20 weeks (Study 1) or 24 weeks (Study 2). The studies were designed to assess the safety and effectiveness of Aranesp but not to support conclusions regarding comparisons between the 2 products.

In Study 1, the hemoglobin target was achieved by 72% (95% CI: 62%, 81%) of the 90 patients treated with Aranesp and 84% (95% CI: 66%, 95%) of the 31 patients treated with rHuEPO. The mean increase in hemoglobin over the initial 4 weeks of Aranesp treatment was 11.0 g/L (95% CI: 8.2 g/L, 13.7 g/L).

In Study 2, the primary efficacy endpoint was achieved by 93% (95% CI: 87%, 97%) of the 129 patients treated with Aranesp and 92% (95% CI: 78%, 98%) of the 37 patients treated with rHuEPO. The mean increase in hemoglobin from baseline through the initial 4 weeks of Aranesp treatment was 13.8 g/L (95% CI: 12.1 g/L, 15.5 g/L).

Conversion From Other ESAs

Two studies (Studies 3 and 4) were conducted in adult patients with CKD who had been receiving ESAs and compared the abilities of Aranesp and erythropoietic agents to maintain hemoglobin concentrations within a study target range of 90 to 130 g/L (see [4 DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION](#) for recommended clinical hemoglobin target). CKD patients who had been receiving stable doses of ESAs were randomized to Aranesp, or to continue with their prior erythropoietin at the previous dose and schedule. For patients randomized to Aranesp, the initial weekly dose was determined on the basis of the previous total weekly dose of ESA. Study 3 was a double-blind study conducted in North America, in which 169 hemodialysis patients were randomized to treatment with Aranesp and 338 patients continued on Epoetin alfa. Study 4 was an open-label study conducted in Europe and Australia in which 347 patients were randomized to treatment with Aranesp and 175 patients were randomized to continue on Epoetin alfa or Epoetin beta. Of the 347 patients randomized to Aranesp, 92% were receiving hemodialysis and 8% were receiving peritoneal dialysis.

In Study 3, a median weekly dose of 0.53 mcg/kg Aranesp (25th, 75th percentiles: 0.30, 0.93 mcg/kg) was required to maintain hemoglobin in the study target range. In Study 4, a median weekly dose of 0.41 mcg/kg Aranesp (25th, 75th percentiles: 0.26, 0.65 mcg/kg) was required to maintain hemoglobin in the study target range.

Other Studies

Study 5 (N = 446) was a multicenter, randomized, double-blind, 28-week, study of the efficacy and safety of darbepoetin alfa manufactured by 2 processes for the treatment of anemia in patients with CKD receiving hemodialysis. Study 6 (N = 1127) was an open-label, single-arm, multicenter study to assess the safety of darbepoetin alfa manufactured by the modified process administered for up to 1 year to CKD patients who were receiving or not receiving dialysis. The hemoglobin target range for Study 5 was 100 to 130 g/L and 110 to 130 g/L for Study 6.

Study 5 demonstrated comparability between the two manufacturing processes in terms of safety and efficacy. The results demonstrate that darbepoetin alfa manufactured by the modified process is equivalent to darbepoetin alfa manufactured using the original process for hemoglobin maintenance and dosing. Mean (SD) hemoglobin concentrations were comparable at baseline (118 [8.0] vs 118 [7.8] g/L) and during the evaluation period (116 [10.7] vs 118 [10.4]). Mean (SD) weekly doses ($\mu\text{g}/\text{week}$) were also comparable in both groups at baseline (36.54 [24.16] vs 37.32 [27.84]) and during the evaluation period (32.09 [26.47] vs 31.10 [26.63]). Safety results were similar in both darbepoetin alfa groups and no new safety information was identified. Safety findings from Study 6 similarly demonstrated no new safety information.

Increased Mortality, Serious Adverse Cardiovascular Reactions, Thromboembolic Events and Stroke

In a clinical trial of Epoetin alfa treatment in hemodialysis patients with clinically evident cardiac disease, patients were randomized to a target hemoglobin of either 140 ± 10 g/L or 100 ± 10 g/L. Higher mortality (35% versus 29%) was observed in the 634 patients randomized to a target hemoglobin of 140 g/L than in the 631 patients assigned a target hemoglobin of 100 g/L. The reason for the increased mortality observed in this study is unknown; however, the incidence of nonfatal myocardial infarction, vascular access thrombosis, and other thrombotic events was also higher in the group randomized to a target hemoglobin of 140 g/L.

A randomized prospective trial (CHOIR) evaluated 1432 anemic chronic renal failure patients who were not undergoing dialysis. Patients were assigned to epoetin alfa treatment targeting a maintenance hemoglobin concentration of 135 g/L or 113 g/L. A major adverse cardiovascular reaction (death, myocardial infarction, stroke or hospitalization for congestive heart failure) occurred among 125 (18%) of the 715 patients in the higher hemoglobin group compared to 97 (14%) among the 717 patients in the lower hemoglobin group (hazard ratio [HR] 1.3, 95% CI: 1.0, 1.7, $p = 0.03$).

In a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study of 4038 patients, there was an increased risk of stroke when Aranesp was administered to patients with anemia, type 2 diabetes, and CKD who were not on dialysis. Patients were randomized to Aranesp treatment targeted to a hemoglobin level of 130 g/L or to placebo. Placebo patients received Aranesp only if their hemoglobin levels were less than 90 g/L. A total of 101 patients receiving Aranesp experienced stroke compared to 53 patients receiving placebo (5% vs. 2.6%; HR 1.92, 95% CI: 1.38, 2.68; $p < 0.001$).

In CKD patients treated with Aranesp or ESAs in Aranesp clinical trials, increases in hemoglobin greater than approximately 10 g/L during any 2-week period were associated with increased incidence of cardiac arrest, neurologic events (including seizures and stroke), exacerbations of hypertension, congestive heart failure, vascular thrombosis/ischemia/infarction, acute myocardial infarction, and fluid overload/edema.

Cancer Patients

Cancer Patients Receiving Chemotherapy

The use of Aranesp in anemic cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy was evaluated in seven studies that were active controlled and/or placebo controlled for up to 6 months duration, at a variety of dosing schedules (1 dose per week, 1 dose every 2 weeks, and 1 dose every 3 weeks). Patients were treated with Aranesp at doses as low as 3.0 mcg/kg administered once every two weeks and as low as 6.75 mcg/kg administered once every three weeks.

Once-Weekly (QW) Dosing

The safety and effectiveness of Aranesp in reducing the requirement for RBC transfusions in patients undergoing chemotherapy was assessed in a randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind, multinational study (C1). This study was conducted in anemic ($Hgb \leq 110$ g/L) patients with advanced, small cell or non-small cell lung cancer, who received a platinum-containing chemotherapy regimen. Patients were randomized to receive Aranesp 2.25 mcg/kg ($n = 156$) or placebo ($n = 158$) administered as a single weekly SC injection for up to 12 weeks.

Efficacy was determined by a reduction in the proportion of patients who were transfused over the 12-week treatment period. A significantly lower proportion of patients in the Aranesp arm, 26% (95% CI: 20%, 33%) required transfusion compared to 60% (95% CI: 52%, 68%) in the placebo arm (Kaplan-Meier estimate of proportion; $p < 0.001$ by Cochran – Mantel – Haenszel test). This represents a greater than 50% reduction in the percentage of patients requiring RBC transfusions ($p < 0.001$). In this double-blind, placebo-controlled phase 3 study, the safety profile of Aranesp was shown to be similar to that of the placebo-control group (see [8 ADVERSE REACTIONS](#)).

Once-Every-3-Week (Q3W) Dosing

The safety and effectiveness of Q3W Aranesp therapy in reducing the requirement for red blood cell (RBC) transfusions in patients undergoing chemotherapy was assessed in a randomized, double-blind, multinational study (C2). This study was conducted in anemic (Hgb < 110 g/L) patients with non-myeloid malignancies receiving multicycle chemotherapy. Patients were randomized to receive either a starting dose of Aranesp 500 mcg Q3W ($n = 353$) or a starting dose of Aranesp 2.25 mcg/kg ($n = 352$) administered weekly as a SC injection for up to 15 weeks. In both groups, the dose was reduced by 40% of the previous dose if hemoglobin increased by more than 10 g/L in a 14-day period, and study drug was withheld if hemoglobin exceeded 130 g/L.

Efficacy was determined by a reduction in the proportion of patients who received at least one RBC transfusion between week 5 and the end of treatment at week 16. A similar proportion of patients in the Aranesp Q3W and weekly groups required a RBC transfusion between weeks 5 and 16 (see [Table 10](#)). Sixty-seven percent of the patients in the Q3W group vs 75% of the patients in the QW group had dose reductions.

Table 10. Percentage (95% CI) of Patients Receiving at Least One RBC Transfusion Between Week 5 and 16

	Q3W Aranesp dosing	QW Aranesp dosing	Difference
RBC transfusion	23% (19%, 28%)	30% (25%, 35%)	-6.8% (-13.6%, 0.1%)

Note: Percentages are estimated using Kaplan-Meier methodology

In a randomized, placebo-controlled, dose-finding trial evaluating Q3W doses of Aranesp ranging from 4.5 mcg/kg to 15 mcg/kg, the minimally effective starting dose with respect to reducing RBC transfusion requirements was 4.5 mcg/kg.

Other randomized clinical studies have been conducted to assess the safety and efficacy of Aranesp administered Q3W. In a randomized, controlled trial, the impact of the timing of once-per-chemotherapy-cycle Aranesp dosing was evaluated with Aranesp given either on the same day as chemotherapy or administered in the middle of the chemotherapy cycle. The results indicated that Aranesp administered on the same day as myelotoxic chemotherapy did not result in any clinically relevant difference in RBC transfusion requirement or safety profile compared with mid-cycle dosing. In a separate trial where cancer patients receiving chemotherapy were randomized to either subcutaneous or intravenous administration of Aranesp, no clinically relevant differences in RBC transfusion requirements or safety were observed.

Tumour Progression, Increased Mortality and Thromboembolic Events

To assess tumour growth factor potential, the effect of Aranesp on tumour progression and survival was evaluated through long-term surveillance of patients treated in the pivotal clinical study. After a median observation period of approximately 1 year, the median time to disease progression in the Aranesp group (n = 155) was 29 weeks (95% CI: 22, 33) compared with 22 weeks (95% CI: 18, 25) in the placebo group (n = 159). The median time to death in the Aranesp group (n = 155) was 43 weeks (95% CI: 37, not estimable) compared with 35 weeks (95% CI: 29, 48) in the placebo group (n = 159). Statistically significant differences in time-to-progression (TTP) or overall survival (OS) were not observed. However, the study was not designed to detect or exclude clinically meaningful differences in either TTP or OS.

In clinical trials of Aranesp in anemic cancer patients receiving chemotherapy, a hemoglobin increase of > 20 g/L per 4-week period was associated with an increased incidence of thrombosis. For anemic cancer patients receiving chemotherapy, it is recommended that the dose of Aranesp be decreased if the rate of hemoglobin increase is more than 15 g/L per 3-week period.

A phase III double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled trial evaluated 989 cancer patients with active malignant disease, not being treated with either chemotherapy or radiation therapy. The median number of days since the last prior chemotherapy and the first dose received by patients was 91.5 days and 83.0 days for the placebo group and Aranesp group, respectively. Per protocol, no patient had received chemotherapy in the 4 weeks preceding the study. This study showed no statistically-significant reduction in the proportion of patients receiving RBC transfusions, and more deaths in the Aranesp group than in the placebo group (26% vs 20%) at 16 weeks (completion of treatment phase). With a median survival follow-up of 4.3 months, the absolute number of deaths at the end of the study was also higher in the Aranesp group (49% vs 46%, HR 1.29, 95% CI: 1.08, 1.55). An increased risk of death was observed in this study where Aranesp was administered to target a hemoglobin of 120 g/L. Aranesp is not indicated for use in patients with cancer who have anemia that is not associated with chemotherapy.

Randomized, controlled trials with decreased survival and/or decreased locoregional control are summarized in [Table 11](#).

Table 11. Randomized, Controlled Trials with Decreased Survival and/or Decreased Locoregional Control

Tumour (n)	Hemoglobin Target	Achieved Hemoglobin (Median Q1, Q3)	Primary Endpoint	Adverse Outcome for ESA- containing Arm
Chemotherapy				
Metastatic breast cancer (n = 939)	120-140 g/L	129 g/L 122, 133 g/L	12-month overall survival	Decreased 12-month survival
Lymphoid malignancy (n = 344)	130-150 g/L (M) 130-140 g/L (F)	110 g/L 98, 121 g/L	Proportion of patients achieving a hemoglobin response	Decreased overall survival
Early breast cancer (n = 733)	125-130 g/L	131 g/L 125, 137 g/L	Relapse-free and overall survival	Lower observed 3-year relapse-free and overall survival*
Cervical cancer (n = 114)	120-140 g/L	127 g/L 121, 133 g/L	Progression-free and overall survival and locoregional control	Lower observed 3-year progression-free and overall survival and locoregional control*
Radiotherapy Alone				
Head and neck cancer (n = 351)	≥ 150 g/L (M) ≥ 140 g/L (F)	Not available	Locoregional progression-free survival	Decreased 5-year locoregional progression-free survival Decreased overall survival
Head and neck cancer (n = 522)	140-155 g/L	Not available	Locoregional disease control	Decreased locoregional disease control
No Chemotherapy or Radiotherapy				
Non-small cell lung cancer (n = 70)	120-140 g/L	Not available	Quality of life	Decreased overall survival
Non-myeloid malignancy (n = 989)	120-130 g/L	106 g/L 94, 118 g/L	RBC transfusions	Decreased overall survival

* Not statistically significant

A systematic review of 57 randomized controlled trials (including the BEST, ENHANCE, and EPO-CAN 20) evaluating 9353 patients with cancer compared erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs) plus RBC transfusion with RBC transfusion alone for prophylaxis or treatment of anemia in cancer patients with or without concurrent antineoplastic therapy. Sub-group analysis of patients treated for chemotherapy-induced anemia from this systematic review demonstrates an overall survival odds ratio (OR) of 0.92 (95% CI: 0.78, 1.09) for platinum-based chemotherapy and 1.10 (95%, CI: 0.96, 1.24) for chemotherapy without platinum. Use of ESAs for treatment of chemotherapy-induced anemia was associated with an OR of 0.99 (95% CI: 0.72, 1.36). An overall survival hazard ratio of 1.08 (95% CI: 0.99, 1.18; 42 trials and 8167 patients) was observed in all ESA-treated patients, including those receiving chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and no active treatment. An increased relative risk of thromboembolic events (RR 1.67, 95% CI: 1.35, 2.06; 35 trials and 6769 patients) was observed in ESA-treated patients.

14.3 Immunogenicity

As with all therapeutic proteins, there is a potential for immunogenicity. Radioimmunoprecipitation assays were performed on sera from 1534 CKD patients and 833 cancer patients treated with Aranesp. High-titer antibodies were not detected, but assay sensitivity may be inadequate to reliably detect lower titers. Since the incidence of antibody formation is highly dependent on the sensitivity and specificity of the assay, and the observed incidence of antibody positivity in an assay may additionally be influenced by several factors including sample handling, concomitant medications, and underlying disease, comparison of the incidence of antibodies to Aranesp with the incidence of antibodies to other products may be misleading.

15 MICROBIOLOGY

No microbiological information is required for this drug product.

16 NON-CLINICAL TOXICOLOGY

General Toxicology:

In preclinical studies darbepoetin alfa was well tolerated up to the highest doses studied, administered as a single IV dose, in rats (200 mcg/kg) and dogs (150 mcg/kg).

Darbepoetin alfa was administered IV to rats and dogs in multiple dose studies at up to 300 mcg/kg/week and 150 mcg/kg/week respectively (as a once and three times per week dosing schedule). The studies ranged from one week to six months in both species. Studies up to one month also included SC administration.

In all studies and in both species darbepoetin alfa produced the expected pharmacological effects on hematological parameters consisting of marked increases in hemoglobin, hematocrits, red blood cell counts and reticulocytes. At higher exposures (based on area under the concentration/time curve) these effects were exaggerated. Histopathological changes such as myelofibrosis and splenic hypertrophy were all considered to be sequelae to the increased viscosity of the blood, vascular congestion and/or blood stasis leading to decreased tissue perfusion.

Carcinogenicity:

Darbepoetin alfa was not evaluated in standard carcinogenicity bioassays. Darbepoetin alfa did not alter the proliferative response of non-hematological cells *in vitro* or *in vivo*. In chronic toxicity studies, no tumorigenic or unexpected mitogenic responses were observed in any tissue type. In toxicity studies of approximately 6 months duration in rats and dogs, no tumorigenic or unexpected mitogenic responses were observed in any tissue type. Using a panel of human tissues, the *in vitro* tissue binding profile of darbepoetin alfa was identical to recombinant human erythropoietin (rHuEPO). Neither molecule bound to human tissues other than those expressing the EPO receptor.

Darbepoetin alfa was negative in the *in vitro* bacterial and CHO cell assays used to detect mutagenicity and in the *in vivo* mouse micronucleus assay to detect clastogenicity.

Genotoxicity:

Darbepoetin alfa did not show any evidence of genotoxic effects in the standard battery of tests designed to identify hazards with respect to DNA damage. Neither did darbepoetin alfa reveal any mutagenic potential nor did it have any effect on the proliferation of non-hematological cells *in vitro* or *in vivo*. In the chronic toxicity studies no tumorigenic or unexpected mitogenic responses were observed in any tissue type.

Reproductive and Developmental Toxicology:

Studies in rats and rabbits showed no relevant evidence of harmful effects with respect to pregnancy, embryo/fetal development, parturition or postnatal development. However, a slight reduction in fetal weights was observed at doses causing toxicities due to exaggerated pharmacological effects in the dams. No placental transfer or alteration of fertility was detected.

When administered to rats before mating, reproductive performance, fertility, and sperm assessment parameters were not affected at any doses evaluated (up to 10 mcg/kg/day). An increase in post-implantation fetal loss was seen with darbepoetin alfa doses of 0.5 mcg/kg/day and higher.

PATIENT MEDICATION INFORMATION

READ THIS FOR SAFE AND EFFECTIVE USE OF YOUR MEDICINE

PrAranesp® (Air-uh-nesp)
darbepoetin alfa injection
SingleJect® Prefilled Syringe

Read this carefully before you start taking **Aranesp** and each time you get a refill. This leaflet is a summary and will not tell you everything about this drug. Talk to your healthcare professional about your medical condition and treatment and ask if there is any new information about **Aranesp**.

Serious Warnings and Precautions

All Patients

- To minimize the risks for death and serious cardiovascular (heart and blood vessel-related) side effects and stroke, your doctor will prescribe the recommended dosage for each indication.
- Patients with uncontrolled high blood pressure should not be treated with Aranesp; blood pressure should be adequately controlled before receiving Aranesp.
- Aranesp should be used with caution in patients with a history of seizures.
- Antibody-mediated Pure Red Cell Aplasia (PRCA) has been reported after months to years of treatment with erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs). If you develop PRCA, you may suddenly become severely anemic and this could result in a dependency on blood transfusions.

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

- If your hemoglobin is kept too high, you have an increased chance of heart attack, stroke, heart failure, blood clots, and death. Your doctor will try to keep your hemoglobin between 100 and 115 g/L, not to exceed 120 g/L.

Cancer Patients

- If you are a cancer patient and your hemoglobin is kept too high (over 120 g/L),
 - your tumour may grow faster,
 - you have an increased chance of heart attack, stroke, blood clots and death.
- Your doctor should use the lowest dose of Aranesp needed to avoid red blood cell (RBC) transfusions.
- In some instances, red blood cell transfusion should be the preferred treatment option.
- Once you have finished your chemotherapy course, Aranesp should be discontinued.

What is Aranesp used for?

- Aranesp is used to treat anemia associated with chronic kidney disease (kidney failure), including patients on dialysis and patients not on dialysis
- Aranesp is used to treat anemia associated with chemotherapy administration in patients with cancer that is not involving or affecting bone marrow.

What is Anemia?

Anemia is a condition where your blood does not contain enough red blood cells. Red blood cells are responsible for carrying oxygen to your organs and body tissues. If the number of red blood cells in your blood is decreased, the amount of oxygen delivered throughout your body is also decreased. This may cause several symptoms that are typical of anemia including fatigue, weakness and shortness of breath.

Anemia and kidney failure

In patients with kidney failure, the kidneys do not produce enough of the natural hormone, erythropoietin, which encourages your bone marrow to produce more red blood cells.

Anemia and cancer

When chemotherapy is given to cancer patients, the body may not be able to produce enough and/or respond adequately enough to its own erythropoietin, the natural hormone that encourages bone marrow to make more red blood cells. As a result, not enough red blood cells are produced in order to overcome the effect of chemotherapy.

How does Aranesp work?

In cancer, when chemotherapy is given to cancer patients, the body may not be able to produce enough and/or respond adequately enough to its own erythropoietin, the natural hormone that encourages bone marrow to make red blood cells. If your kidneys are no longer able to produce enough erythropoietin you may benefit by receiving Aranesp. Aranesp will stimulate your bone marrow to produce more red blood cells. Like the natural hormone erythropoietin, the active ingredient of Aranesp, “darbepoetin alfa”, travels through the blood and binds to specific cells in the bone marrow. This signals the bone marrow to produce more red blood cells and release them into the blood. As a result, the number of red blood cells circulating in the blood increases and they can deliver more oxygen to your organs and tissues. This helps in managing the symptoms that are associated with anemia. It takes a few weeks for this process to occur.

Your doctor will know when Aranesp is working because your blood tests will show an increase in the number of red blood cells. He/she may refer to the results of your blood tests as hemoglobin and/or hematocrit, and will check these tests while you are being treated with Aranesp. These blood tests may be done more often at the beginning of your treatment or if your dose of Aranesp changes. The increase in the number of red blood cells is not immediate; it may take several weeks. The amount of time it takes to reach the red blood cell level that is right for you, and the dose of Aranesp needed to make the red blood cell level rise, is different for each person. You may need several Aranesp dose adjustments before you reach your correct dose of Aranesp and the correct dose may change over time. Your doctor will also check your blood pressure regularly. In some cases, your doctor may recommend that you take iron supplements.

How long will it take to feel better?

Because it will take your bone marrow some time to make more red blood cells, it may take a few weeks before you notice any effects.

I have been treated with Epoetin alfa for my renal failure; what can I expect from Aranesp?

In clinical trials, Aranesp has proved to be as efficacious in correcting and regulating anemia as Epoetin alfa, in patients with chronic kidney disease who have been switched from Epoetin alfa to Aranesp as well as in new patients. Because Aranesp has been designed to work in your body for a longer period of time, it is possible to achieve the same results with fewer injections.

What are the ingredients in Aranesp?

Medicinal ingredients: darbepoetin alfa

Non-medicinal ingredients: Polysorbate 80, Sodium Chloride, Sodium Phosphate Dibasic Anhydrous, Sodium Phosphate Monobasic Monohydrate

Aranesp comes in the following dosage forms:

Aranesp is available as a liquid for injection, and comes in single-use vials or single-use prefilled syringes.

Single-use vials are not available in Canada.

The needle cover on the single-use prefilled syringe contains dry natural rubber (latex), which should not be handled by persons sensitive to this substance.

Do not use Aranesp if:

- You have uncontrolled high blood pressure.
- Your body makes antibodies (develop Pure Red Cell Aplasia) following treatment with any erythropoiesis-stimulating agent (ESA).
- You are allergic to Aranesp or any of the ingredients (for example, polysorbate 80) in Aranesp.
- You are allergic to other erythropoietins, or medicines made using mammalian cells.

Talk to your doctor if you have any questions about this information.

To help avoid side effects and ensure proper use, talk to your healthcare professional before you take Aranesp. Talk about any health conditions or problems you may have, including if you:

- Have a hemodialysis vascular access, continue to check the access to make sure it is working. Call your doctor or dialysis centre right away if you have any problems or questions. Always call your doctor if you do not feel well while using Aranesp.
- Are a cancer patient you should be aware that Aranesp is a red blood cell growth factor and in some circumstances your cancer may grow faster. You should discuss treatment options for your anemia with your doctor.

Other warnings you should know about:

Please tell your doctor if you are suffering or have suffered from:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease (e.g., angina)
- Epileptic fits (seizures)

It is important to tell your doctor if you:

- Are pregnant
- Think you may be pregnant
- Plan to get pregnant, or are breast-feeding

Too much Aranesp may cause your body to produce too many red blood cells too fast (lead to a hemoglobin that is too high). Producing too many red blood cells, or producing them too fast may cause serious problems. It is important that your blood pressure be monitored often and to report any changes outside of the guidelines that your doctor has given you, especially if you have heart disease. Certain laboratory tests, such as hemoglobin, hematocrit, or iron level measurements, may also need to be done more often and be reported to your doctor or dialysis centre.

It is important to keep all appointments for blood tests to allow your doctor to adjust the dosage of Aranesp as needed.

Over time, many patients also need to take iron. Your doctor will know when or if you need an iron supplement from your laboratory test results. Do not change the dose of Aranesp.

Be sure to change the site for each injection to avoid soreness at any one site. Occasionally a problem may develop at the injection site. If there is a lump, swelling, or bruising at the injection site that does not go away, talk to your doctor.

Pure Red Cell Aplasia (PRCA), in association with antibodies, has been observed in patients treated with ESAs. PRCA is a condition in which severe and sudden anemia (characterized by symptoms such as severe tiredness/fatigue, and shortness of breath on mild exertion) develops due to failure of the bone marrow to produce red blood cells. PRCA could result in a dependency on blood transfusions. Should you be diagnosed with PRCA, your doctor will stop your Aranesp therapy and may initiate treatment with blood transfusions to help increase your red blood cell count. PRCA has been reported predominantly in patients with chronic kidney disease. PRCA has been reported in a very rare number of patients exposed to Aranesp subcutaneously (under your skin).

Tell your healthcare professional about all the medicines you take, including any drugs, vitamins, minerals, natural supplements or alternative medicines.

The following may interact with Aranesp:

No drug-drug interaction studies for Aranesp have been carried out with other medications commonly used to treat chronic kidney disease or cancer.

How to take Aranesp:

IMPORTANT: TO HELP AVOID CONTAMINATION AND POSSIBLE INFECTION DUE TO INJECTION, PLEASE READ AND FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.

Aranesp is available in the presentations listed below. Your doctor will prescribe the type that is best for you.

- Single-use prefilled syringe
- Single-use vial[†]

[†]Single-use vials are not available in Canada.

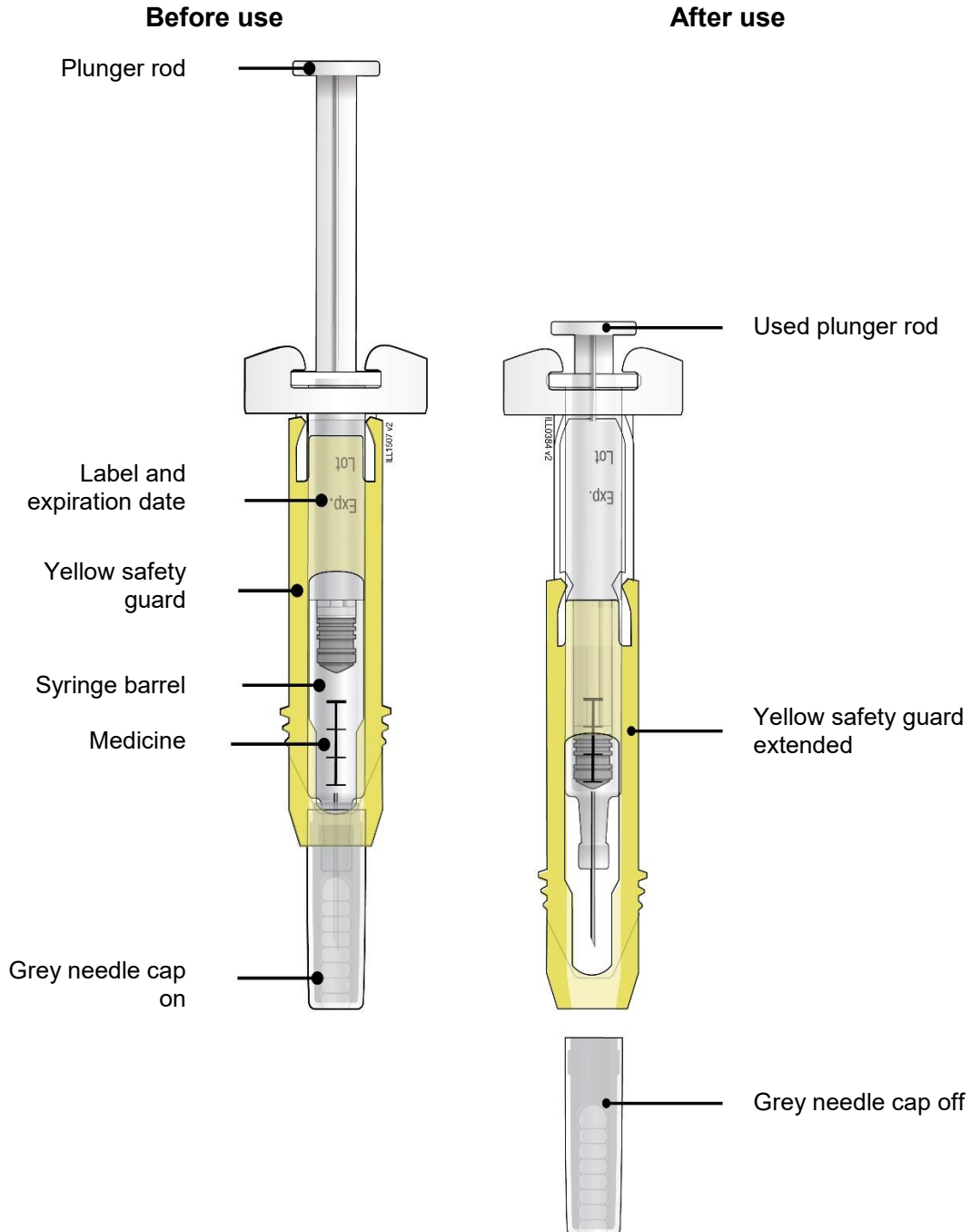
If your doctor decides that you or a caregiver can give the injections of Aranesp, you or your caregiver should receive training on the right way to prepare and inject Aranesp. Do not try to inject Aranesp until you have been shown the right way by your healthcare professional.

Always follow the instructions provided by your healthcare professional concerning the dosage and administration of Aranesp. Do not change the dose or method of administration of Aranesp, without consulting your doctor. If you are not sure about giving the injection or you have any questions, please ask your healthcare professional for help.

Aranesp SingleJect® Prefilled Syringe

The following instructions are for preparing and giving an injection of Aranesp using a single-use SingleJect® prefilled syringe with manual needle guard.

Guide to parts



Important: Needle is inside

Important:

Before you use an Aranesp prefilled syringe, read this important information.

Storing your prefilled syringe

- Keep the prefilled syringe out of the reach of children.
- Keep the prefilled syringe in the original carton to protect from light or physical damage.
- The prefilled syringe should be kept in the refrigerator at 2°C to 8°C (36°F to 46°F).
- Do NOT store the prefilled syringe in extreme heat or cold. For example, avoid storing in your vehicle's glove box or trunk.
- Do NOT freeze.

Using your prefilled syringe

It is important that you do not try to give the injection unless you or your caregiver has received training from your healthcare professional.

- Make sure the name Aranesp appears on the carton and prefilled syringe label.
- Check the carton and prefilled syringe label to make sure the dose strength (number of micrograms [mcg]) matches your prescription.
- Do NOT use a prefilled syringe after the expiration date on the label.
- Do NOT shake the prefilled syringe.
- Do NOT remove the grey needle cap from the prefilled syringe until you are ready to inject.
- Do NOT use the prefilled syringe if the carton is open or damaged.
- Do NOT use a prefilled syringe if it has been dropped on a hard surface. Part of the prefilled syringe may be broken even if you cannot see the break. Use a new prefilled syringe.
- Do NOT slide the yellow safety guard over the needle before the injection. This will “activate” or lock the yellow safety guard. Use a new prefilled syringe that has not been activated and is ready to use.

In any of the above cases, use a new prefilled syringe.

- This product contains dry natural rubber, which is made from latex, within the grey needle cap. Tell your healthcare professional if you are allergic to latex.

Call your healthcare professional or Amgen Medical Information at 1-866-502-6436 if you have any questions. For more information, contact the AIDe Program at 1-866-479-6377.

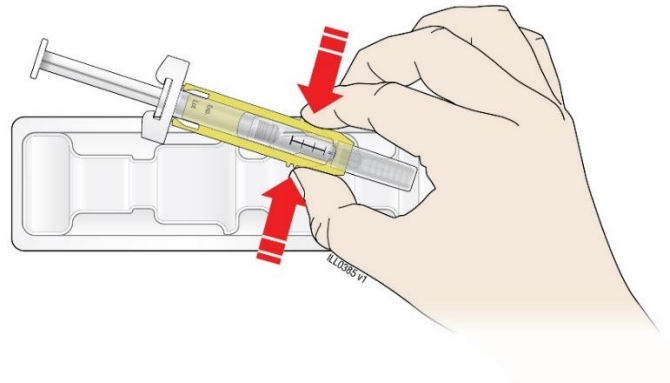
Step 1: Prepare

A. Remove the prefilled syringe carton from the refrigerator.

Remove one prefilled syringe from the carton and put the original package with any unused prefilled syringes back in the refrigerator.

- Do NOT use the prefilled syringe if the carton is damaged.
- Do NOT try to warm the prefilled syringe by using a heat source such as hot water or microwave.
- Do NOT leave the prefilled syringe in direct sunlight.
- Do NOT shake the prefilled syringe.

Open the tray by peeling away the cover. Grab the yellow safety guard to remove the prefilled syringe from the tray.

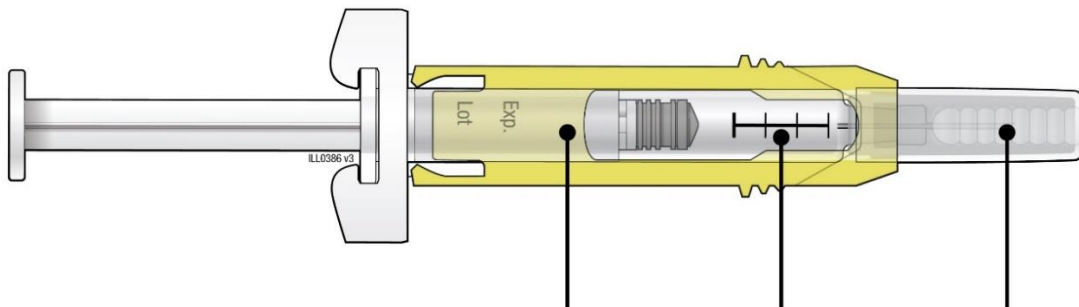


GRAB HERE

For safety reasons:

- Do NOT grab the plunger rod.
- Do NOT grab the grey needle cap.

B. Inspect the medicine and prefilled syringe



Label and expiration date

Medicine

Grey needle cap

Always hold the syringe by the syringe barrel.

Make sure the medicine in the prefilled syringe is clear and colourless.

Do NOT use the prefilled syringe if:

- the medicine is cloudy or discoloured or contains flakes or particles.
- any part appears cracked or broken.
- the prefilled syringe has been dropped.
- the grey needle cap is missing or not securely attached.
- the expiration date printed on the label has passed.

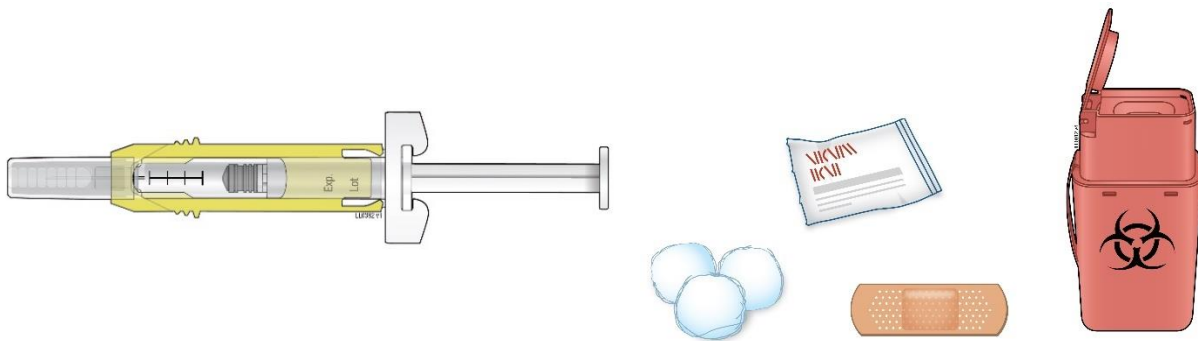
In all cases, use a new prefilled syringe and call your healthcare professional or Amgen Medical Information at 1-866-502-6436. For more information, contact the AIDe Program at 1-866-479-6377.

C. Gather all materials needed for your injection.

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

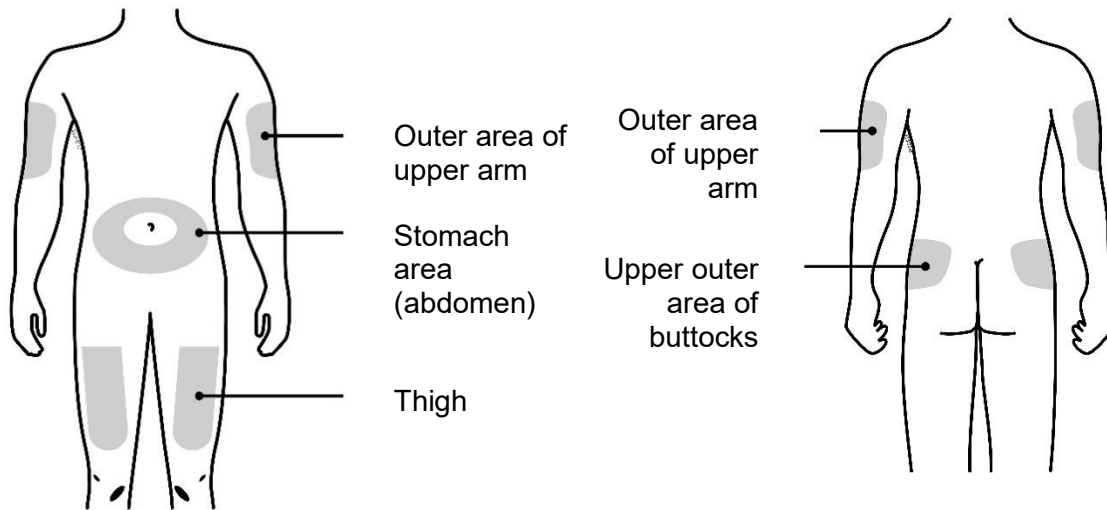
On a clean, well-lit work surface, place the:

- Prefilled syringe
- Alcohol wipe
- Cotton ball or gauze pad
- Adhesive bandage
- Sharps disposal container



Step 2: Get ready

D. Prepare and clean site for subcutaneous injection (skip this if port injection is prescribed).



You can use:

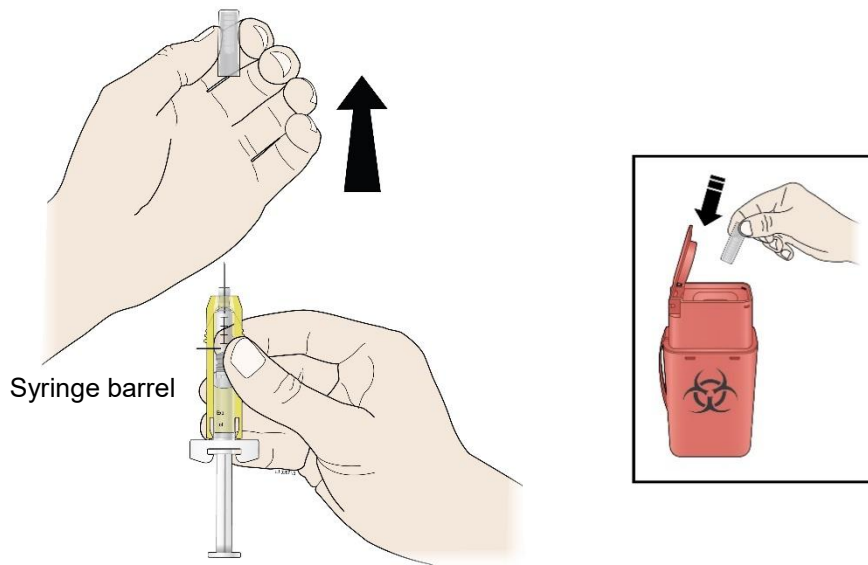
- Thigh
- Stomach area (abdomen), except for a 5 cm (2-inch) area right around your navel (belly button)
- Upper outer area of your buttocks (only if someone else is giving you the injection)
- Outer area of upper arm (only if someone else is giving you the injection).

Clean the injection site with an alcohol wipe. Let your skin dry.

- Do NOT touch this area again before injecting.
- Choose a different site each time you give yourself an injection. If you want to use the same injection site, make sure it is not the same spot on the injection site area you used for a previous injection.
- Do NOT inject into areas where the skin is tender, bruised, red, or hard. Avoid injecting into areas with scars or stretch marks.

Important: Follow your healthcare professional's instructions about selecting sites for injection appropriate to you and about changing the site for each injection.

- E. Hold the prefilled syringe by the syringe barrel. Carefully pull the grey needle cap straight off and away from your body.



- Do NOT remove the grey needle cap from the prefilled syringe until you are ready to inject.
- Do NOT twist or bend the grey needle cap.
- Do NOT hold the prefilled syringe by the plunger rod.
- Do NOT put the grey needle cap back onto the prefilled syringe.

Important: Throw the grey needle cap into the sharps disposal container.

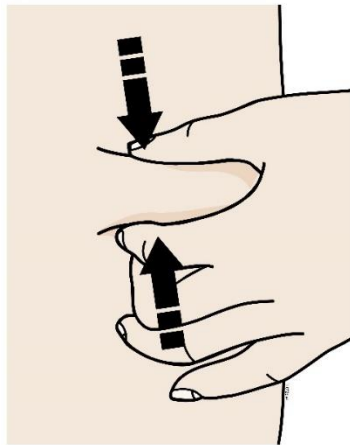
- F.  **Read this before you inject.**

In **Step 3**, choose between Subcutaneous (**3a**) **OR** Port injection (**3b**) based on your healthcare professional's instructions.

When you feel you are ready, please continue.

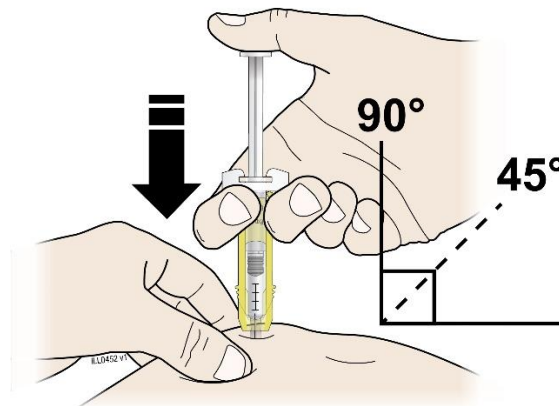
Step 3a: Subcutaneous (under the skin) injection

- G. Pinch your injection site to create a firm surface.

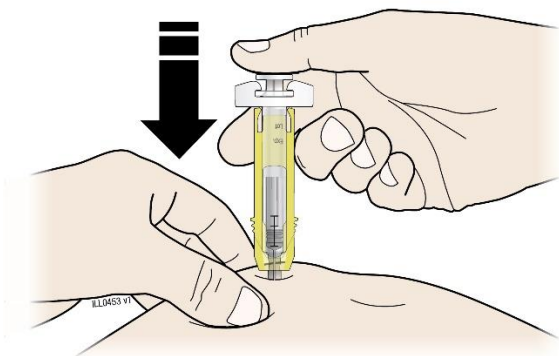


Important: Keep skin pinched while injecting.

- H. Hold the pinch. Insert the needle into the skin at 45 to 90 degrees.



- I. Using slow and constant pressure, push the plunger rod until it reaches the bottom.



When done, gently pull the syringe off of your skin, and **continue to Step 4: Finish.**

Important: When you remove the syringe, if it looks like the medicine is still in the syringe barrel, this means you have not received a full dose. Call your healthcare professional immediately.



Step 3b: Port injection

If your healthcare professional has prescribed an injection into your home hemodialysis system, you should be first trained by your healthcare professional and then follow the procedure described below.

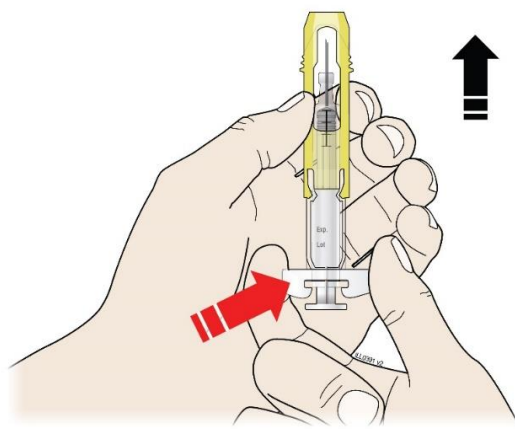
- A. Locate the port on the hemodialysis tubing where your healthcare professional prescribed you to inject. Do NOT inject into the hemodialysis tubing.
- B. Clean the port with an alcohol wipe.
- C. Insert the prefilled syringe needle at a 90° angle, directly into the center of the rubber septum located on the cleaned port. Do NOT bend the needle. The rubber septum may require increased pressure to penetrate with the needle.
- D. Push the plunger down until it reaches the bottom.
- E. Remove the syringe from the port.

Now, continue to Step 4: Finish

Step 4: Finish

- J.  **Before you finish!**

For your safety, pull the yellow safety guard until it clicks and covers the needle.



GRAB HERE

Once extended, the yellow safety guard will lock into position and will not slide back over the needle.

Keep your hands away from the needle at all times.

K. Discard (throw away) the used prefilled syringe.



- Put the used prefilled syringe in a sharps disposal container right away after use. Do NOT throw away (dispose of) the syringe in the household trash.
- If you do not have a sharps disposal container, you may use a household container that is:
 - made of a heavy-duty plastic,
 - can be closed with a tight-fitting, puncture-resistant lid, without sharps being able to come out,
 - upright and stable during use,
 - leak-resistant, and
 - properly labeled to warn of hazardous waste inside the container.
- When your sharps disposal container is almost full, you will need to follow your community guidelines for the right way to dispose of your sharps disposal container. There may be provincial or local laws about how you should throw away used needles and syringes.
- Do NOT reuse the prefilled syringe.
- Do NOT recycle the prefilled syringe or sharps disposal container or throw them into household trash.

Important: Always keep the sharps disposal container out of the reach of children.

L. Examine the subcutaneous injection site.

If there is blood, press a cotton ball or gauze pad on the injection site. Do NOT rub the injection site. Apply an adhesive bandage if needed.

Usual dose:

Aranesp is given to patients as an injection. The method of injection depends on your clinical condition as indicated below.

For patients with chronic kidney disease, one of the following methods will be used:

- under your skin (subcutaneous); or
- into the venous line connecting the hemodialysis machine to your vein (intravenous), if you are on hemodialysis

You and your doctor will determine which is best for you. Your doctor will determine how much you must take and how often you need to take it. Aranesp is given once a week or in some cases, once every two weeks. Your doctor will try to keep your hemoglobin between 100 and 115 g/L, not to exceed 120 g/L.

For cancer patients, there is only one method for injection as follows:

- under your skin (subcutaneous)

Your doctor will determine how much you must take and how often you need to take it. Aranesp is typically given once a week or in some cases, once every two or three weeks. Your doctor should use the lowest dose of Aranesp needed to help you avoid RBC transfusions. Once you have finished your chemotherapy course, Aranesp should be discontinued.

Overdose:

If self-administering this medication, be sure to adhere to the prescribed dose.

Severe hypertension (including hypertensive crisis and malignant hypertension) has been observed following overdose with Aranesp. If there is a significant increase in your blood pressure seek immediate medical attention.

If you think you, or a person you are caring for, have taken too much Aranesp, contact a healthcare professional, hospital emergency department, or regional poison control centre immediately, even if there are no symptoms.

Missed Dose:

You should ask your doctor what to do if you miss a dose of Aranesp.

What are possible side effects from using Aranesp?

These are not all the possible side effects you may have when taking Aranesp. If you experience any side effects not listed here, tell your healthcare professional.

If you get headaches, particularly sudden stabbing migraine-like headaches or you start to feel confused or have seizures you should tell your doctor immediately. These may be the warning signs of a sudden rise in blood pressure and may need urgent treatment.

For hemodialysis patients there may be a chance of blood clots (thrombosis) forming in your vascular access (a channel that bypasses normal blood circulation).

Patients with cancer may have an increased risk of blood clots in veins (thrombophlebitis) or the lungs (pulmonary embolus). Call your doctor if you experience pain and/or swelling in the legs or worsening in shortness of breath.

You may notice stinging around the area that you were injected. This stinging will only last for a short period of time and may be more common at the start of your treatment. Some people have also had infections, fevers, headaches, muscle aches or soreness, nausea, and chest pain. If you experience any of these symptoms, you should call your doctor. If any of these symptoms persist or you notice any side effects that are not mentioned in this leaflet, please tell your healthcare professional.

Other signs that may appear at the site of injection are redness, swelling, or itching. This may indicate an allergy to the components of Aranesp, or it may indicate a local reaction. If you have a local reaction, consult your doctor.

Serious allergic reactions have been observed, including sudden life-threatening allergic reactions with drop in blood pressure, fast pulse, difficulty breathing and sweating (anaphylaxis), swelling of the face, lips, mouth, tongue or throat (angioedema), shortness of breath (allergic bronchospasm), skin rash/rash over the whole body, hives. If you think you are having a serious allergic reaction, stop taking Aranesp and notify your doctor or emergency medical personnel immediately.

Serious side effects and what to do about them			
Symptom / effect	Talk to your healthcare professional		Stop taking drug and get immediate medical help
	Only if severe	In all cases	
COMMON			
Increase in blood pressure (symptoms may include headaches, confusion, seizures)		X	
Diarrhea		X	
Infections		X	
Fever		X	
Muscle aches		X	
Nausea		X	
Chest pain		X	
UNCOMMON			
Blood clots		X	
Stroke		X	
Allergic reaction		X	X
UNKNOWN			
Severe Cutaneous Reactions (symptoms may include a rash, which may be severe, may cover your whole body and can also include blisters or areas of skin coming off)		X	X

If you have a troublesome symptom or side effect that is not listed here or becomes bad enough to interfere with your daily activities, tell your healthcare professional.

Reporting Side Effects

You can report any suspected side effects associated with the use of health products to Health Canada by:

- Visiting the Web page on Adverse Reaction Reporting (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medeffect-canada.html>) for information on how to report online, by mail or by fax; or
- Calling toll-free at 1-866-234-2345.

NOTE: Contact your health professional if you need information about how to manage your side effects. The Canada Vigilance Program does not provide medical advice.

Storage:

You should store Aranesp in the refrigerator (between 2°C and 8°C), but not in the freezer. Do not let Aranesp freeze and do not use Aranesp if you think that it has been frozen. You can take Aranesp out of the refrigerator and let it warm to room temperature (approximately 30 minutes) before injecting it. Aranesp does not contain any preservatives so you should not use it if you have it at room temperature (up to 25°C) for longer than 24 hours.

Always keep the Aranesp vials[†] or syringes in the original pack and do not leave them in direct sunlight.

The expiry date for Aranesp is stamped on the pack and on the vial[†] or syringe label. Do not use Aranesp after the last day of the month and year shown.

As with all medicines, you should keep Aranesp out of the reach and sight of children.

[†]Single-use vials are not available in Canada.

If you want more information about Aranesp:

- Talk to your healthcare professional
- Find the full Product Monograph that is prepared for healthcare professionals and includes this Patient Medication Information by visiting the Health Canada website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/drug-products/drug-product-database.html>; the manufacturer's website: www.amgen.ca, or by calling 1-866-502-6436.

This leaflet was prepared by Amgen Canada Inc.

UltraSafe[®] is a registered trademark of Safety Syringes, Inc.

Last Revised: October 27, 2023

PATIENT MEDICATION INFORMATION

READ THIS FOR SAFE AND EFFECTIVE USE OF YOUR MEDICINE

^{Pr}**Aranesp**[®] (Air-uh-nesp)
darbepoetin alfa injection
Single-use Vials[†]

†Single-use vials are not available in Canada.

Read this carefully before you start taking **Aranesp** and each time you get a refill. This leaflet is a summary and will not tell you everything about this drug. Talk to your healthcare professional about your medical condition and treatment and ask if there is any new information about **Aranesp**.

Serious Warnings and Precautions

All Patients

- To minimize the risks for death and serious cardiovascular (heart and blood vessel-related) side effects and stroke, your doctor will prescribe the recommended dosage for each indication.
- Patients with uncontrolled high blood pressure should not be treated with Aranesp; blood pressure should be adequately controlled before receiving Aranesp.
- Aranesp should be used with caution in patients with a history of seizures.
- Antibody-mediated Pure Red Cell Aplasia (PRCA) has been reported after months to years of treatment with erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs). If you develop PRCA, you may suddenly become severely anemic and this could result in a dependency on blood transfusions.

Chronic Kidney Disease Patients

- If your hemoglobin is kept too high, you have an increased chance of heart attack, stroke, heart failure, blood clots, and death. Your doctor will try to keep your hemoglobin between 100 and 115 g/L, not to exceed 120 g/L.

Cancer Patients

- If you are a cancer patient and your hemoglobin is kept too high (over 120 g/L),
 - your tumour may grow faster,
 - you have an increased chance of heart attack, stroke, blood clots and death.
- Your doctor should use the lowest dose of Aranesp needed to avoid red blood cell (RBC) transfusions.
- In some instances, red blood cell transfusion should be the preferred treatment option.
- Once you have finished your chemotherapy course, Aranesp should be discontinued.

What is Aranesp used for?

- Aranesp is used to treat anemia associated with chronic kidney disease (kidney failure), including patients on dialysis and patients not on dialysis
- Aranesp is used to treat anemia associated with chemotherapy administration in patients with cancer that is not involving or affecting bone marrow.

What is Anemia?

Anemia is a condition where your blood does not contain enough red blood cells. Red blood cells are responsible for carrying oxygen to your organs and body tissues. If the number of red blood cells in your blood is decreased, the amount of oxygen delivered throughout your body is also decreased. This may cause several symptoms that are typical of anemia including fatigue, weakness and shortness of breath.

Anemia and kidney failure

In patients with kidney failure, the kidneys do not produce enough of the natural hormone, erythropoietin, which encourages your bone marrow to produce more red blood cells.

Anemia and cancer

When chemotherapy is given to cancer patients, the body may not be able to produce enough and/or respond adequately enough to its own erythropoietin, the natural hormone that encourages bone marrow to make more red blood cells. As a result, not enough red blood cells are produced in order to overcome the effect of chemotherapy.

How does Aranesp work?

In cancer, when chemotherapy is given to cancer patients, the body may not be able to produce enough and/or respond adequately enough to its own erythropoietin, the natural hormone that encourages bone marrow to make red blood cells. If your kidneys are no longer able to produce enough erythropoietin you may benefit by receiving Aranesp. Aranesp will stimulate your bone marrow to produce more red blood cells. Like the natural hormone erythropoietin, the active ingredient of Aranesp, “darbepoetin alfa”, travels through the blood and binds to specific cells in the bone marrow. This signals the bone marrow to produce more red blood cells and release them into the blood. As a result, the number of red blood cells circulating in the blood increases and they can deliver more oxygen to your organs and tissues. This helps in managing the symptoms that are associated with anemia. It takes a few weeks for this process to occur.

Your doctor will know when Aranesp is working because your blood tests will show an increase in the number of red blood cells. He/she may refer to the results of your blood tests as hemoglobin and/or hematocrit, and will check these tests while you are being treated with Aranesp. These blood tests may be done more often at the beginning of your treatment or if your dose of Aranesp changes. The increase in the number of red blood cells is not immediate; it may take several weeks. The amount of time it takes to reach the red blood cell level that is right for you, and the dose of Aranesp needed to make the red blood cell level rise, is different for each person. You may need several Aranesp dose adjustments before you reach your correct dose of Aranesp and the correct dose may change over time. Your doctor will also check your blood pressure regularly. In some cases, your doctor may recommend that you take iron supplements.

How long will it take to feel better?

Because it will take your bone marrow some time to make more red blood cells, it may take a few weeks before you notice any effects.

I have been treated with Epoetin alfa for my renal failure; what can I expect from Aranesp?

In clinical trials, Aranesp has proved to be as efficacious in correcting and regulating anemia as Epoetin alfa, in patients with chronic kidney disease who have been switched from Epoetin alfa to Aranesp as well as in new patients. Because Aranesp has been designed to work in your body for a longer period of time, it is possible to achieve the same results with fewer injections.

What are the ingredients in Aranesp?

Medicinal ingredients: darbepoetin alfa

Non-medicinal ingredients: Polysorbate 80, Sodium Chloride, Sodium Phosphate Dibasic Anhydrous, Sodium Phosphate Monobasic Monohydrate

Aranesp comes in the following dosage forms:

Aranesp is available as a liquid for injection, and comes in single-use vials or single-use prefilled syringes.

Single-use vials are not available in Canada.

The needle cover on the single-use prefilled syringe contains dry natural rubber (latex), which should not be handled by persons sensitive to this substance.

Do not use Aranesp if:

- You have uncontrolled high blood pressure.
- Your body makes antibodies (develop Pure Red Cell Aplasia) following treatment with any erythropoiesis-stimulating agent (ESA).
- You are allergic to Aranesp or any of the ingredients (for example, polysorbate 80) in Aranesp.
- You are allergic to other erythropoietins, or medicines made using mammalian cells.

Talk to your doctor if you have any questions about this information.

To help avoid side effects and ensure proper use, talk to your healthcare professional before you take Aranesp. Talk about any health conditions or problems you may have, including if you:

- Have a hemodialysis vascular access, continue to check the access to make sure it is working. Call your doctor or dialysis centre right away if you have any problems or questions. Always call your doctor if you do not feel well while using Aranesp.
- Are a cancer patient you should be aware that Aranesp is a red blood cell growth factor and in some circumstances your cancer may grow faster. You should discuss treatment options for your anemia with your doctor.

Other warnings you should know about:

Please tell your doctor if you are suffering or have suffered from:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease (e.g., angina)
- Epileptic fits (seizures)

It is important to tell your doctor if you:

- Are pregnant
- Think you may be pregnant
- Plan to get pregnant, or are breast-feeding

Too much Aranesp may cause your body to produce too many red blood cells too fast (lead to a hemoglobin that is too high). Producing too many red blood cells, or producing them too fast may cause serious problems. It is important that your blood pressure be monitored often and to report any changes outside of the guidelines that your doctor has given you, especially if you have heart disease. Certain laboratory tests, such as hemoglobin, hematocrit, or iron level measurements, may also need to be done more often and be reported to your doctor or dialysis centre.

It is important to keep all appointments for blood tests to allow your doctor to adjust the dosage of Aranesp as needed.

Over time, many patients also need to take iron. Your doctor will know when or if you need an iron supplement from your laboratory test results. Do not change the dose of Aranesp.

Be sure to change the site for each injection to avoid soreness at any one site. Occasionally a problem may develop at the injection site. If there is a lump, swelling, or bruising at the injection site that does not go away, talk to your doctor.

Pure Red Cell Aplasia (PRCA), in association with antibodies, has been observed in patients treated with ESAs. PRCA is a condition in which severe and sudden anemia (characterized by symptoms such as severe tiredness/fatigue, and shortness of breath on mild exertion) develops due to failure of the bone marrow to produce red blood cells. PRCA could result in a dependency on blood transfusions. Should you be diagnosed with PRCA, your doctor will stop your Aranesp therapy and may initiate treatment with blood transfusions to help increase your red blood cell count. PRCA has been reported predominantly in patients with chronic kidney disease. PRCA has been reported in a very rare number of patients exposed to Aranesp subcutaneously (under your skin).

Tell your healthcare professional about all the medicines you take, including any drugs, vitamins, minerals, natural supplements or alternative medicines.

The following may interact with Aranesp:

No drug-drug interaction studies for Aranesp have been carried out with other medications commonly used to treat chronic kidney disease or cancer.

How to take Aranesp:

IMPORTANT: TO HELP AVOID CONTAMINATION AND POSSIBLE INFECTION DUE TO INJECTION, PLEASE READ AND FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.

Aranesp is available in the presentations listed below. Your doctor will prescribe the type that is best for you.

- Single-use prefilled syringe
- Single-use vial

If your doctor decides that you or a caregiver can give the injections of Aranesp, you or your caregiver should receive training on the right way to prepare and inject Aranesp. Do not try to inject Aranesp until you have been shown the right way by your healthcare professional.

Always follow the instructions provided by your healthcare professional concerning the dosage and administration of Aranesp. Do not change the dose or method of administration of Aranesp, without consulting your doctor. If you are not sure about giving the injection or you have any questions, please ask your healthcare professional for help.

Step 1: Prepare

A. Remove the Aranesp vial from the refrigerator.

Place it on a clean, well-lit working place with a flat surface such as a table. Allow it to reach room temperature. This should take about 30 minutes.

- Do NOT leave the vial in direct sunlight.
- Do NOT use it if it has been frozen.

B. Inspect the vial.

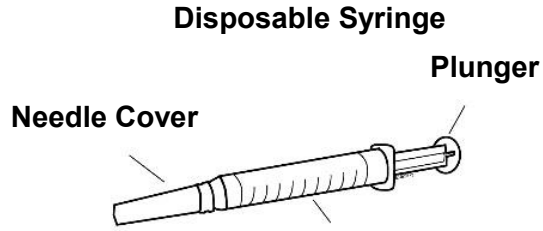
- Check that the strength on the vial is the strength that your doctor prescribed for you.
- Check the date on the label to be sure that the product has not expired.
- Aranesp should be a clear, colourless solution. If the solution has particles or is discoloured, do not use it, and check with your healthcare professional.
- DO NOT SHAKE THE VIAL. Shaking may damage the Aranesp. If the product has been shaken vigorously, the solution may appear foamy and it should not be used.

C. Gather all materials needed for the injection.

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

Along with the Aranesp vial; on the clean, well-lit work surface, place the:

- Disposable syringe
- Alcohol wipe
- Cotton ball or gauze pad
- Adhesive bandage
- Sharps disposal container

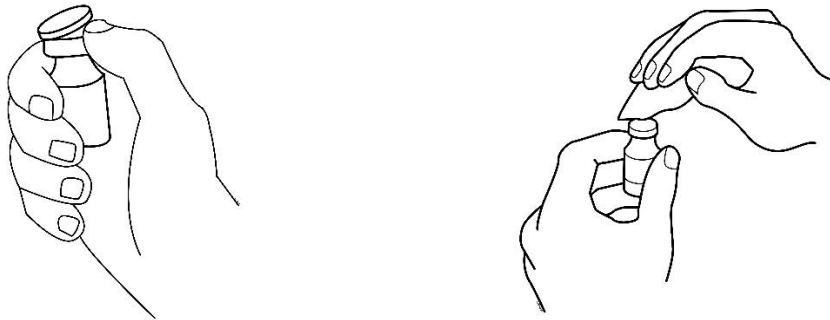


Your healthcare professional will give you instructions on how to measure your dose of Aranesp and draw it from the vial into the syringe. Only use the syringe that your doctor prescribes. This dose will be measured in millilitres. You should only use a syringe that is marked in tenths of millilitres or mL (for example, 0.2 mL). Your healthcare professional may refer to an "mL" as a "cc" (1 mL = 1 cc). Using an unmarked syringe can lead to a mistake in the dose. If you do not use the correct syringe, you could inject too much or too little Aranesp. Each Aranesp vial is designed to be used only once.

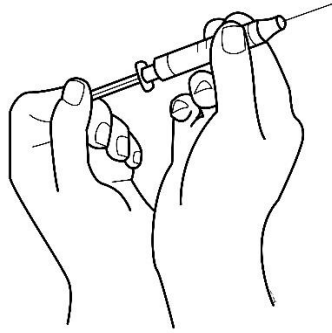
- Do NOT put the needle through the rubber stopper more than once.
- Use only disposable syringes and needles.
- Use the syringes and needles only once and dispose of them as instructed by your healthcare professional (see Step 4: Finish below).

Step 2: Get ready

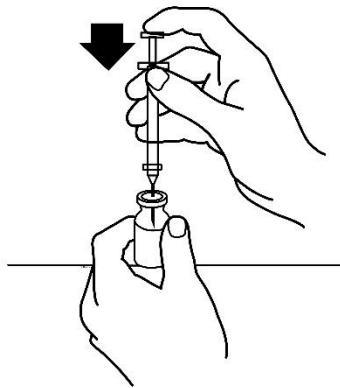
D. Take the yellow colour cap off the vial. Clean the rubber stopper with one alcohol swab.



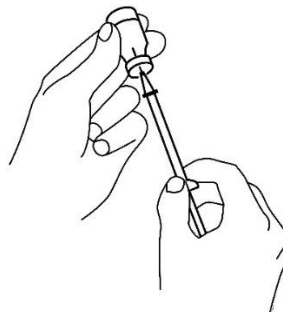
- E.** Check the package containing the syringe. If the package has been opened or damaged, do not use that syringe. You should dispose of that syringe in the puncture-proof disposal container (see Step 4: Finish below). If the syringe package is undamaged, open the package and remove the syringe.
- F.** Pull the needle cover straight off the syringe. Then, pull back on the plunger to draw air into the syringe. The amount of air drawn into the syringe should be the same amount (mL or cc) as the dose of Aranesp that your doctor prescribed.



- G.** Keep the vial on your flat working surface.
- Insert the needle straight down through the rubber stopper.
 - Push the plunger of the syringe down to inject the air from the syringe into the vial of Aranesp.



- H.** Keeping the needle inside the vial, turn the vial upside down. Make sure that the tip of the needle is in the Aranesp liquid.



Keeping the vial upside down, slowly pull back on the plunger to fill the syringe with Aranesp liquid to the number (mL or cc) that matches the dose your doctor prescribed.

Keeping the needle in the vial, check for air bubbles in the syringe. If there are air bubbles, gently tap the syringe with your fingers until the air bubbles rise to the top of the syringe. Then slowly push the plunger up to force the air bubbles out of the syringe. Keep the tip of the needle in the liquid and once again pull the plunger back to the number on the syringe that matches your dose. Check again for air bubbles. The air in the syringe will not hurt you, but too large an air bubble can reduce your dose of Aranesp. If there are still air bubbles, repeat the steps above to remove them.

Check again to make sure that you have the correct dose in the syringe. It is important that you use the exact dose prescribed by your doctor.

I. **Read this before you inject.**

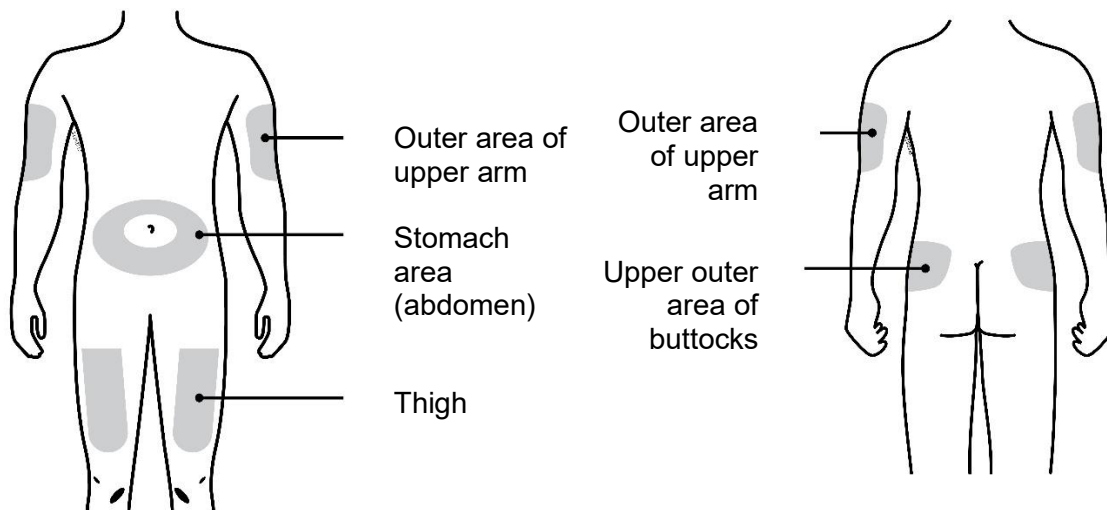


In **Step 3**, choose between Subcutaneous (**3a**) **OR** Port injection (**3b**) based on your healthcare professional's instructions.

When you feel you are ready, please continue.

Step 3a: Prepare injection site and Subcutaneous (under the skin) injection

J. Prepare and clean the injection site.



You can use:

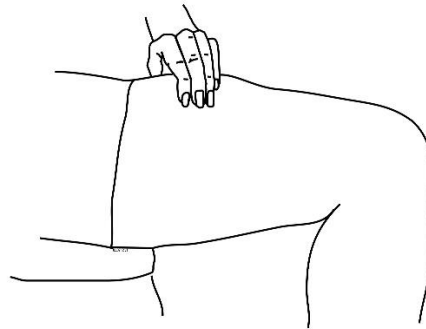
- Thigh
- Stomach area (abdomen), except for a 5 cm (2-inch) area right around the navel (belly button)
- Upper outer area of your buttocks (only if someone else is giving you the injection)
- Outer area of upper arm (only if someone else is giving you the injection).

Clean the injection site with an alcohol wipe. Let the skin dry.

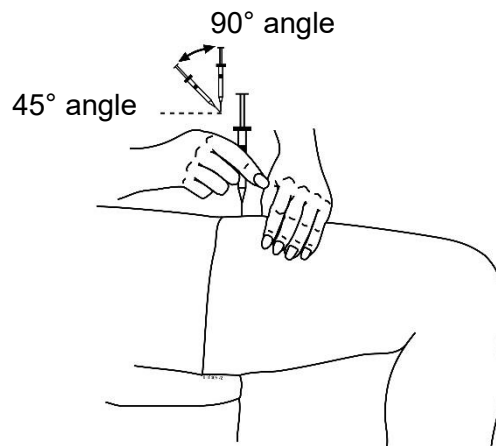
- Do NOT touch this area again before injecting.
- Choose a different site each time you give yourself an injection. Choosing a new site can avoid soreness at any one site. If you want to use the same injection site, make sure it is not the same spot on the injection site area you used for a previous injection.
- Do NOT inject into areas where the skin is tender, bruised, red, or hard. Avoid injecting into areas with scars or stretch marks.

Important: Follow your healthcare professional's instructions about selecting sites for injection appropriate to you and about changing the site for each injection.

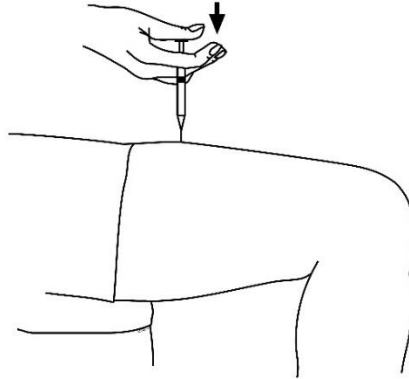
- K.** Hold the syringe in the hand that you will use to inject Aranesp. Use the other hand to pinch a fold of skin at the cleaned injection site.



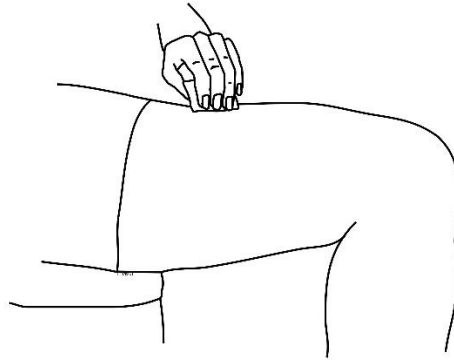
- L.** Holding the syringe like a pencil, use a quick “dart like” motion to insert the needle either straight up and down (90 degree angle) or at a slight angle (45 degrees) into the skin.



- M. After the needle is inserted, let go of the skin. Inject the prescribed dose subcutaneously as directed by your healthcare professional.



- N. When the syringe is empty, pull the needle out of the skin and place a cotton ball or gauze over the injection site and press for several seconds.



You should ONLY use a syringe and vial once. You should discard the vial with any remaining Aranesp.



Step 3b: Port injection

If your healthcare professional has prescribed an injection into your home hemodialysis system, you should be first trained by your healthcare professional and then follow the procedure described below.

- A. Locate the port on the hemodialysis tubing where your healthcare professional prescribed you to inject. Do NOT inject into the hemodialysis tubing.
- B. Clean the port with an alcohol wipe.
- C. Insert the syringe at a 90° angle, directly into the center of the rubber septum located on the cleaned port. Do NOT bend the needle. The rubber septum may require increased pressure to penetrate with the needle.
- D. Push the plunger down until it reaches the bottom.
- E. Remove the syringe from the port.

Now, continue to Step 4: Finish

Step 4: Finish

- O. Dispose of the syringe and needle as instructed by your healthcare professional, or by following these steps:
- Do NOT throw the needle or syringe in the household trash or recycle.
 - Do NOT put the needle cover (the cap) back on the needle. Place all used needles and syringes in a hard plastic container, or a metal container with a plastic lid. Do not use glass or clear plastic containers, or any container that will be recycled or returned to a store.
 - Properly label the container to indicate its contents. If a metal container such as a coffee can with a plastic lid is used, cut a small hole in the plastic lid and tape the lid onto the metal container. When the container is full, cover the hole and dispose of the container according to your healthcare professional's instructions.
 - If an opaque (do not use clear plastic), hard plastic container with a screw-on cap is used, always screw the cap on tightly after each use. When the container is full, tape around the cap or lid and dispose of the container according to the instructions provided by your healthcare professional. There may be special local laws that they will discuss with you.
 - Always store the container out of the reach of children.
 - You should always first check with your healthcare professional for instructions on how to properly dispose of a filled container. There may be local laws for disposal of used needles and syringes. Do not throw the container in household trash. Do not recycle.

Usual dose:

Aranesp is given to patients as an injection. The method of injection depends on your clinical condition as indicated below.

For patients with chronic kidney disease, one of the following methods will be used:

- under your skin (subcutaneous); or
- into the venous line connecting the hemodialysis machine to your vein (intravenous), if you are on hemodialysis

You and your doctor will determine which is best for you. Your doctor will determine how much you must take and how often you need to take it. Aranesp is given once a week or in some cases, once every two weeks. Your doctor will try to keep your hemoglobin between 100 and 115 g/L, not to exceed 120 g/L.

For cancer patients, there is only one method for injection as follows:

- under your skin (subcutaneous)

Your doctor will determine how much you must take and how often you need to take it. Aranesp is typically given once a week or in some cases, once every two or three weeks. Your doctor should use the lowest dose of Aranesp needed to help you avoid RBC transfusions. Once you have finished your chemotherapy course, Aranesp should be discontinued.

Overdose:

If self-administering this medication, be sure to adhere to the prescribed dose.

Severe hypertension (including hypertensive crisis and malignant hypertension) has been observed following overdose with Aranesp. If there is a significant increase in your blood pressure seek immediate medical attention.

If you think you, or a person you are caring for, have taken too much Aranesp, contact a healthcare professional, hospital emergency department, or regional poison control centre immediately, even if there are no symptoms.

Missed Dose:

You should ask your doctor what to do if you miss a dose of Aranesp.

What are possible side effects from using Aranesp?

These are not all the possible side effects you may have when taking Aranesp. If you experience any side effects not listed here, tell your healthcare professional.

If you get headaches, particularly sudden stabbing migraine-like headaches or you start to feel confused or have seizures you should tell your doctor immediately. These may be the warning signs of a sudden rise in blood pressure and may need urgent treatment.

For hemodialysis patients there may be a chance of blood clots (thrombosis) forming in your vascular access (a channel that bypasses normal blood circulation).

Patients with cancer may have an increased risk of blood clots in veins (thrombophlebitis) or the lungs (pulmonary embolus). Call your doctor if you experience pain and/or swelling in the legs or worsening in shortness of breath.

You may notice stinging around the area that you were injected. This stinging will only last for a short period of time and may be more common at the start of your treatment. Some people have also had infections, fevers, headaches, muscle aches or soreness, nausea, and chest pain. If you experience any of these symptoms, you should call your doctor. If any of these symptoms persist or you notice any side effects that are not mentioned in this leaflet, please tell your healthcare professional.

Other signs that may appear at the site of injection are redness, swelling, or itching. This may indicate an allergy to the components of Aranesp, or it may indicate a local reaction. If you have a local reaction, consult your doctor.

Serious allergic reactions have been observed, including sudden life-threatening allergic reactions with drop in blood pressure, fast pulse, difficulty breathing and sweating (anaphylaxis), swelling of the face, lips, mouth, tongue or throat (angioedema), shortness of breath (allergic bronchospasm), skin rash/rash over the whole body, hives. If you think you are having a serious allergic reaction, stop taking Aranesp and notify your doctor or emergency medical personnel immediately.

Serious side effects and what to do about them			
Symptom / effect	Talk to your healthcare professional		Stop taking drug and get immediate medical help
	Only if severe	In all cases	
COMMON			
Increase in blood pressure (symptoms may include headaches, confusion, seizures)		X	
Diarrhea		X	
Infections		X	
Fever		X	
Muscle aches		X	
Nausea		X	
Chest pain		X	
UNCOMMON			
Blood clots		X	
Stroke		X	
Allergic reaction		X	X
UNKNOWN			
Severe Cutaneous Reactions (symptoms may include a rash, which may be severe, may cover your whole body and can also include blisters or areas of skin coming off)		X	X

If you have a troublesome symptom or side effect that is not listed here or becomes bad enough to interfere with your daily activities, tell your healthcare professional.

Reporting Side Effects

You can report any suspected side effects associated with the use of health products to Health Canada by:

- Visiting the Web page on Adverse Reaction Reporting (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medeffect-canada.html>) for information on how to report online, by mail or by fax; or
- Calling toll-free at 1-866-234-2345.

NOTE: Contact your health professional if you need information about how to manage your side effects. The Canada Vigilance Program does not provide medical advice.

Storage:

You should store Aranesp in the refrigerator (between 2°C and 8°C), but not in the freezer. Do not let Aranesp freeze and do not use Aranesp if you think that it has been frozen. You can take Aranesp out of the refrigerator and let it warm to room temperature (approximately 30 minutes) before injecting it. Aranesp does not contain any preservatives so you should not use it if you have it at room temperature (up to 25°C) for longer than 24 hours.

Always keep the Aranesp vials or syringes in the original pack and do not leave them in direct sunlight.

The expiry date for Aranesp is stamped on the pack and on the vial or syringe label. Do not use Aranesp after the last day of the month and year shown.

As with all medicines, you should keep Aranesp out of the reach and sight of children.

If you want more information about Aranesp:

- Talk to your healthcare professional
- Find the full Product Monograph that is prepared for healthcare professionals and includes this Patient Medication Information by visiting the Health Canada website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/drug-products/drug-product-database.html>; the manufacturer's website: www.amgen.ca, or by calling 1-866-502-6436.

This leaflet was prepared by Amgen Canada Inc.

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