

PHARMACY

Drug Information

L-asparaginase Injection



What is L-asparaginase?

- L-asparaginase is an anticancer drug used to treat leukemia or lymphoma.

How is L-asparaginase Administered / Taken?

- L-asparaginase can be given as an injection into your muscles (intramuscular) or into your veins as an infusion (intravenous).

Can L-asparaginase be Administered / Taken With Other Medications?

- Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications, including supplements, traditional or herbal remedies.

What are the Important Side Effects of L-asparaginase?

- Hypersensitivity reactions

These are usually mild or moderate, but rarely, they can be more severe. You may be given drugs before the injection to reduce the chance of a reaction happening.

Inform the nurses immediately during infusion of L-asparaginase if you experience the following:

-Flu-like symptoms, such as headache, feeling flushed, having a fever, chills or dizziness.

-Red, warm and itchy bumps on the skin.

-Swelling in the lips, tongue or throat.

-Breathlessness, wheezing, a cough or sudden difficulty breathing.

-Chest tightness or chest pain.

If you develop any of the symptoms above or feel unwell after you get home, please proceed to the A & E department immediately.

- Medications prescribed by your doctor should be beneficial for your condition even though they may result in some inevitable side effects.

Side Effect	Management
Bruising or bleeding may occur as L-asparaginase can reduce the number of platelets and clotting factors in your blood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce risk of bleeding problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Try not to bruise, cut or burn yourself. -Clean your nose by blowing gently. Do not pick your nose. -Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily. -Be aware that bleeding may take a longer time to stop. • Please proceed to the A & E department immediately if you experience signs of bleeding such as blood in urine or stools, or easy bruising.
Risk of infection may be increased as L-asparaginase can reduce the number of white blood cells in your blood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce risk of infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Wash your hands after using the toilet. -Avoid crowds and people who are sick. -Do not share food and avoid taking raw food. • Please proceed to the A & E department immediately if you experience signs of an infection such as fever with a temperature above 38°C, chills, and burning sensation when passing urine. • Do not take Paracetamol (Panadol®) to relieve fever unless instructed by your doctor/ nurse.

Side Effect	Management
Increase in cholesterol or triglycerides (blood fats)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss this with your doctor if you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -History of heart disease -High blood pressure -High cholesterol or triglycerides • You may need to have your cholesterol level checked prior to starting and periodically after starting L-asparaginase.
Increase in blood sugar level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may need to check your sugar level regularly if you are diabetic.
Fatigue or tiredness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not drive or operate machinery if you are feeling tired. Inform your doctor if fatigue is persistent or worsens.
Abdominal pain and tenderness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please proceed to the A & E department immediately if you experience such symptoms as it could be a sign of inflammation of the pancreas.
Mood changes, confusion, hallucinations, personality changes, Parkinson-like symptoms (e.g. tremors, rigidity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please proceed to the A & E department immediately if you experience such symptoms.

If you develop rashes, facial swelling or shortness of breath after taking the medication, you could be allergic to the medication. Please seek medical attention immediately.

Are There any Special Precautions That I Need to Take?

- It is important to inform your doctor if you intend to conceive or breastfeed while taking this medication.
- You must not become pregnant during treatment with L-asparaginase and must use an effective method of contraception. You should take appropriate contraceptive measures during and up to 6 months after cessation of treatment. If pregnancy occurs during your treatment, you must inform your doctor immediately.
- L-asparaginase may have an anti-fertility effect, which could be irreversible. You should discuss with your doctor regarding fertility preservation prior to starting treatment.
- You should not breast-feed during treatment.

What Else can I do to Help My Condition?

- Exercise

Light exercise is recommended as it helps to improve mobility, balance and even emotional well-being. Do avoid strenuous exercise, and rest when you are feeling tired.

- Stay positive

Understand your condition and take an active role in managing it. Do not be afraid to talk about it with your doctor/ pharmacist/ family members. Repressed feelings can be harmful to your immediate well-being and long-term health.

- Adequate hydration

Maintain adequate hydration with 2 to 3 litres (8 to 12 cups) of fluids per day unless informed by your doctor to restrict fluids. This will decrease your chances of being constipated and also prevent dehydration.

- Medical and dental treatment

If you need to go into hospital for any reason other than cancer, always inform the doctors and nurses that you are having chemotherapy. Talk to your cancer doctor if you think you need dental treatment. Always inform your dentist that you are having chemotherapy.

If you have any problem with your treatment, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician.

You can also find useful information with regards to your medication on this website:

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support>

