

PHARMACY

Drug Information

Pembrolizumab (Keytruda®) Injection



What is Pembrolizumab?

- Pembrolizumab is used to treat cancer by enhancing your immune system to attack the cancer cells.

How is Pembrolizumab Administered?

- Pembrolizumab is given as an 30 minutes injection into the vein (intravenous) every three weeks.

Can Pembrolizumab be Administered / Taken With Other Medications?

- Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications, including Traditional Chinese Medicines, Jamu medicines or supplements.

What are the Important Side Effects of Pembrolizumab?

Infusion related reaction

- These are usually mild or moderate, but rarely, they can be more severe. You may be given drugs before the infusion to reduce the chance of a reaction happening.
- If you do have an infusion related reaction, this can usually be treated by slowing or stopping the drip until the reaction is over. Any future infusions will be given at a slower rate.
- *Inform the nurses immediately during infusion of Pembrolizumab 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 of the lips, tongue or throat
 - Breathlessness, wheezing, a cough or sudden difficulty breathing
 - Chest tightness or chest pain

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

Side Effect	Management
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.
Skin rash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For mild rash, you may apply topical steroid creams to help with the rashes and ensure use of moisturizers and sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 30. • Inform your doctor if rash is widespread or worsening despite applying topical creams.
Muscle aches and joint pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild pain can be relieved by taking Paracetamol (Panadol ®). Inform your doctor if pain is not controlled by Paracetamol (Panadol ®). Avoid Paracetamol (Panadol ®) when you are having fever. • Taking regular warm baths may also help.
Nausea or vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take small, frequent meals. • Avoid smells that precipitate nausea. • Take medicines for nausea or vomiting prescribed by your doctor. • Avoid tight-fitting clothes around the waist.
Diarrhoea (colitis, inflammation of the bowel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your doctor may prescribe medicines to control diarrhoea • Please proceed to the A&E department if you experience abdominal pain, diarrhoea, cramping, mucus or blood in stool, or dark and sticky stools occur

Side Effect	Management
Changes in the way the liver works (Hepatitis, inflammation of the liver)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please proceed to the A & E department immediately if you experience any yellowing of eye white and skin or tea-coloured urine, pale stools or severe abdominal pain.
Lung problems (Pneumonitis, inflammation of the lung)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please proceed to the A&E department immediately if you experience difficulty in breathing, shortness of breath, chest pain and/or new or worsening cough
Hormone abnormalities (inflammation of the pituitary, thyroid, pancreas and adrenal glands can occur and affect the production of certain hormones)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some hormone levels can be monitored with periodic blood tests • Some of the signs and symptoms include headaches, nausea, vomiting, constipation, rapid heart rate, increased sweating, extreme fatigue, weakness, changes in your voice, changes in memory and concentration, increased hunger or thirst, increased urination, weight gain, hair loss, dizziness, feeling cold all the time, and changes in mood or behavior • Inform your doctor should any of these occurs
Kidney problems, including nephritis and kidney failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please proceed to the A & E department immediately if you experience decreased amount of urine, blood in your urine, swelling in your ankles and loss of appetite.

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 Pembrolizumab and must use an effective method of contraception. You should take appropriate contraceptive measures during and up to 4 months after stopping treatment. If pregnancy occurs during your treatment, you must inform your doctor immediately.
- Pembrolizumab 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. 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 getting constipation 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>



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