

## Peginterferon Alfa-2b

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

### Brand Names: US

PegIntron [DSC]

### Warning

- Alpha interferons may cause mental health problems or make them worse. Suicide or suicidal thoughts, thoughts of hurting others, depression, forceful actions, hallucinations, and other mood or behavior problems have happened during treatment and within 6 months after the last dose. Relapse of drug use disorder has also happened. Alpha interferons may also cause or make infections, blood flow problems, or autoimmune diseases worse. Sometimes, these may be deadly. If you think your child has any of these health problems, call your child's doctor right away. Side effects such as high or low blood pressure, a fast or abnormal heartbeat, chest pain or pressure, trouble breathing, heart attacks, and strokes have happened. Closely read the part in this leaflet which lists when to call your child's doctor. Many times, but not every time, these side effects get better after stopping this drug.

## **What is this drug used for?**

### **Peg-Intron®:**

- It is used to treat hepatitis C infection.
- It may be given to your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

### **Sylatron:**

- If your child has been given this form of this drug, talk with the doctor for information about the benefits and risks. Talk with the doctor if you have questions or concerns about giving this drug to your child.

## **What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?**

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child has autoimmune hepatitis.
- If your child has ever had liver problems other than hepatitis C.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe to give this drug with all of your child's other drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

## **What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?**

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.

- High blood sugar has happened with this drug. This includes diabetes that is new or worse.
- Check your child's blood sugar as you have been told by the doctor.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- Take care of your child's teeth. See a dentist often.
- If your child throws up, have your child rinse the mouth out well.
- Alcohol may interact with this drug. Be sure your child does not drink alcohol.
- High triglyceride levels have happened with this drug. Tell your child's doctor if your child has ever had high triglyceride levels.
- Tell the doctor if your child takes a drug that has caffeine or eats or drinks products that have caffeine, like tea, coffee, cola, or chocolate.
- It is not known if this drug will prevent liver failure or other liver problems like cancer. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug does not stop the spread of hepatitis to others through blood, body fluids, or having sex. Be sure your child does not have any kind of sex without using a condom. Be sure needles and other injection equipment are not shared. Be sure personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them like toothbrushes or razors are not shared. Talk with your child's doctor or other health care provider about safe sex and other ways to have your child prevent spreading hepatitis to others.
- This drug may be used with ribavirin. If your child is also taking ribavirin, talk with the doctor about the risks and side effects that may happen.
- This drug may cause fertility problems. This may affect being able to have children later in life. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may affect growth in children and teens in some cases. They may need regular growth checks. Talk with the doctor.
- If your child is of childbearing age, a pregnancy test will need to be done

before starting this drug to make sure your child is not pregnant.

### **If your child is or may be sexually active:**

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if your child takes it during pregnancy.
- Have your child use birth control while taking this drug and for some time after the last dose. Ask the doctor how long your child must use birth control. If your child becomes pregnant, call the doctor right away.

### **If your child is breast-feeding a baby:**

- Tell the doctor if your child is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about any risks to the baby.

### **What are some side effects that I need to call my child's doctor about right away?**

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of thyroid problems like change in weight; feeling nervous, excitable, restless, or weak; hair thinning; depression; eye or neck swelling; not able to focus; trouble with heat or cold; menstrual changes; shakiness; or sweating.
- Signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- Weakness on 1 side of the body, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, drooping on one side of the face, or blurred eyesight.

- Chest pain or pressure.
- Fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- Very bad dizziness or passing out.
- Change in look of teeth or gums.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- This drug may cause eye problems that may lead to loss of eyesight or blindness. Tell your child's doctor if your child has or has ever had eye problems. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has any changes in eyesight.
- Low blood cell counts have happened with this drug. If blood cell counts get very low, this can lead to bleeding problems, infections, or anemia. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat; any unexplained bruising or bleeding; or if your child feels very tired or weak.
- Liver problems have happened with this drug. Rarely, this has been deadly. Call the doctor right away if your child has signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Some people have had lung problems with this drug. Sometimes, this has been deadly. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has signs of lung problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough that is new or worse, or fever.
- Severe bowel problems (colitis) have happened within 12 weeks of treatment with alpha interferons like this drug. Sometimes, this could be deadly. Call the doctor right away if your child has severe stomach pain, bloody diarrhea, throwing up blood, or throw up that looks like coffee grounds.
- Severe and sometimes deadly pancreas problems (pancreatitis) have happened with this drug. This could happen at any time during treatment. Call the doctor right away if your child has signs of pancreatitis like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very

upset stomach or throwing up.

- A severe skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause severe health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if your child has signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.

## **What are some other side effects of this drug?**

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Flu-like signs.
- Diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Hair loss.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Feeling dizzy, tired, or weak.
- Headache.
- Muscle or joint pain.
- Weight loss.
- Change in taste.
- Dry mouth.
- Irritation where the shot is given.
- Flushing.
- Sweating a lot.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for

medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

## **How is this drug best given?**

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- It is given as a shot into the fatty part of the skin.
- If you will be giving your child the shot, your child's doctor or nurse will teach you how to give the shot.
- Acetaminophen may be given to lower fever and chills.
- Give at bedtime to help with flu-like signs.
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- This drug must be mixed with sterile water before using. The sterile water that comes with this drug is meant for one use only. Throw away any part of the sterile water that is not used after one use.
- Do not shake.
- Do not use if the solution is cloudy, leaking, or has particles.
- Do not use if solution changes color.
- Move the site where you give the shot with each shot.
- Use right away after mixing or you may store in a refrigerator for up to 24 hours.
- Throw away any part of the opened vial not used after the shot is given.
- Throw away needles in a needle/sharp disposal box. Do not reuse needles or other items. When the box is full, follow all local rules for getting rid of it. Talk with a doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.
- Have your child drink lots of noncaffeine liquids every day unless told to drink less liquid by your child's doctor.

## **What do I do if my child misses a dose?**

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

## **How do I store and/or throw out this drug?**

- Store at room temperature. Do not freeze.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

## **General drug facts**

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

## **Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer**

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for



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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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