



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Aranesp (Darbepoetin) for Renal Anaemia

Information for patients, relatives and carers

## **Renal Department**

York and Scarborough Hospitals  
Tel: 01904 725370

① For more information, please contact:

Renal Anaemia Team on  
Tel: 01904 721809

The Renal Pharmacy Team on  
Tel: 01904 725963

Harrogate Renal Unit on  
Tel: 01423 554513

Fresenius Medical Care (FMC)  
Freephone: 0800 032 0568

# **What is Aranesp Injection?**

Aranesp (sometimes called by its other name darbepoetin), is an injection prescribed by your renal consultant when your kidneys are not working properly and you have become anaemic. Aranesp replaces a natural substance in your body called erythropoietin.

The kidneys make erythropoietin which helps your bone marrow to make red blood cells. When your kidneys are not working well they do not produce enough erythropoietin and you may become anaemic. Aranesp injection helps your bone marrow to produce the red blood cells again and make you less anaemic.

# **How is the Injection administered?**

Aranesp is usually injected under the skin in your arm, thigh or stomach. This is called a subcutaneous injection.

Your doctor, nurse or pharmacy team will tell you how often the injections have to be administered. This may be once a week or once every two, three or four weeks. The dose or frequency of injections may be changed depending on how well you respond to the Aranesp.

The injection is stored in a fridge. It should be taken out of the fridge about 30 minutes before injecting to allow it to warm to room temperature. (See information about storing your injections on page 7).

## What blood tests and monitoring will I need to have?

When you start Aranesp injections the consultant or the anaemia team at the hospital will make arrangements for you to have monthly blood tests. **It is very important that you have these blood tests because we cannot issue a repeat prescription without checking your blood results.** Once your blood count is stable your consultant may decide that blood tests will only need to be done every two to three months.

You should have your blood pressure checked regularly (usually every two weeks when you first start the injections). You may be able to get your blood pressure checked if you get your blood tests taken at the GP surgery or by a district nurse. Alternatively, you may want to buy a home blood pressure machine to check your own blood pressure. You will be asked to let the anaemia team know your blood pressure readings. If we are arranging a new prescription and do not have a record of your blood pressure within the last three months we will contact you to ensure you are having regular blood pressure checks.

When using Aranesp it is important to seek advice if you experience a severe headache or confusion. These are warnings that your blood pressure may be rising and requires an urgent medical review.

## **What happens if my Aranesp dose is changed?**

If you respond well to the injections and your blood results are too high or if your blood count remains low your Aranesp dose may be changed by your consultant. If you have supplies of Aranesp injection at home we may ask you to use these up by changing the frequency of the injection. A member of the anaemia team will always contact you to explain what to do.

If you are having the injections administered by a nurse at the GP surgery or the district nurse we will always confirm the changes with them.

A new prescription will be delivered to you when your current supplies of Aranesp are used up.

## **What are the possible side effects?**

Aranesp can cause unwanted side effects, though these usually improve as your body gets used to it.

The most common side effect is discomfort at the injection site. This discomfort is generally mild and should only last for a short time. This discomfort may be reduced by taking the injection out of the fridge about 30 minutes before injecting to allow it to warm to room temperature.

Other side effects may include joint pain, ankle swelling, skin rashes and flu-like symptoms. If you experience any of these or have any other problems, discuss them with your consultant, nurse or GP or a member of the anaemia team.

There is a very small risk of more serious side effects. This includes an increased risk of heart attacks and strokes in some people. These risks are largely related to using big doses of aranesp or to sudden rises in blood pressure or very fast increases in the blood count. This is why we need to monitor your blood pressure and blood tests carefully. In most people the risk of these side effects is small, and the benefits of treatment is greater than any risk.

## **Where will I get my Aranesp injections from?**

When you first start Aranesp injections you may be given a prescription from your renal consultant at the hospital clinic visit. The hospital consultant will let the renal anaemia team know you are to start the injections and a member of the team will contact you to make arrangements for the Aranesp to be delivered to you.

Occasionally we will start Aranesp injections if you are an inpatient in the hospital. The anaemia team will make arrangements for the injections to be continued after discharge. The injections have to be prescribed by the hospital. Your GP will not prescribe the injections for you.

Your Aranesp will be delivered to your home by a delivery company called Fresenius Medical Care (FMC). If delivery to your home address is not convenient we can make arrangements for the Aranesp to be delivered to an alternative address. If necessary you can pick the injection up from York Hospital. This will be discussed with you. The hospital will continue to take full responsibility for your prescription and will co-ordinate any dose changes with FMC.

The anaemia team will ask you some questions to ensure we have all of your contact details correct when we explain the procedure for supplying the Aranesp injection. All information is confidential and cannot be shared with the home delivery company without your consent.

## **Who is Fresenius Medical Care (FMC)?**

This company provides a helpful and professional delivery service to our patients. FMC will try to make sure you are talking to someone you know. You are provided with a personal FMC co-ordinator who will make an introductory telephone call and explain the delivery arrangements for your new injections. They will deliver your Aranesp injections to you at mutually arranged date and time.

The hospital will continue to take full responsibility for your prescription and will manage any dose changes with FMC. Your co-ordinator works closely with your hospital renal team to make sure your prescription is up to date.

If you have any questions you can phone your personal co-ordinator on Freephone number 0800 032 0568.

## **Storing your injections correctly**

Aranesp must be stored correctly.

- Always keep Aranesp in the fridge at a temperature between 2 and 8°C
- Never freeze your Aranesp
- Always keep your Aranesp syringes in their outer packaging to protect them from light
- If you accidentally leave your Aranesp out of the fridge please contact your anaemia team or pharmacist for advice (contact numbers are on the front of the leaflet)

Aranesp injection can sometimes feel more painful when it is injected immediately after removal from the fridge. You should take the syringe needed for your next dose out of the fridge 30 minutes before injecting to allow it to warm to room temperature. Any syringes that are brought to room temperature in this way must be used within 48 hours.

## **Delivery of your Aranesp injections**

The delivery drivers all wear a uniform and have badges so you can easily identify them. When possible the same driver will deliver your Aranesp so they become a familiar face for you to recognise. All the drivers receive training and will provide a professional and helpful service for you.

The driver will deliver your Aranesp syringes as arranged with you. If you agree they will put your Aranesp in your fridge arranged in order of expiry date. All you need to do is check and sign the delivery note.

If you cannot be at home for a delivery (for example, you have a hospital appointment that day) contact your personal FMC co-ordinator as soon as possible so other arrangements can be made.

If you go into hospital and you are due a delivery of Aranesp, your personal FMC co-ordinator will need to know when you are admitted and when you are returning home. The renal anaemia team will contact FMC for you if we know you are in hospital.

# How do I dispose of the used injections safely?

You must never throw a used injection device directly into the waste bin at home in case the needle accidentally pricks someone when they are emptying the waste.

If the district nurse is coming to give you the injections he or she will dispose of the used injection device safely for you.

If you are administering the injections to yourself then you should dispose of the device in a sealed container called a sharps bin. FMC will provide you with a sharps bin and they also provide a sharps bin collection service. Your driver will collect and replace your sharps bin when it is full. We recommend that you use this service since some local council's will charge you for disposing of sharps bins. If you would like the sharps removal service please let your FMC personal co-ordinator know.

Alternatively, your GP can prescribe a sharps bin for you. The sharps bin can be taken back to the GP practise when it is full.

Always remember to keep used injections well out of the reach of children.

# What to do if you run short of supplies

Simply phone your FMC personal co-ordinator on 0800 032 0568 (Freephone number) to let them know that you need a new supply. Under normal circumstances your co-ordinator will check your stock levels when calling for your next order so they can make sure there is less likelihood of you running out.

If you still need help or advice you can contact the renal anaemia team on 01904 721809 or pharmacy on 01904 725963 and we will be able to help.

## Summary

Fresenius will deliver your Aranesp to you. All you need to do is:

- be at home for your delivery or arrange for someone else to take delivery of your Aranesp for you
- store your Aranesp correctly in the fridge
- contact Fresenius Medical Care if you have any problems on the Freephone number 0800 032 0568
- contact the renal anaemia team at the hospital if you have any questions about your injections or anaemia treatment; 01904 721809 or 01904 725963

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

The Renal Anaemia Team, York Renal Unit,  
The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or  
telephone 01904 721809.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

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