



York Teaching Hospital
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

Caring with pride

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What is Aranesp?

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 often will I need the injections?

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

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

What blood tests and monitoring will I need to have?

When you start your Aranesp injections, you will have your blood pressure checked regularly (usually every two weeks). 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 blood tests will only need to be done every two to three months.

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. Someone 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 explain the changes to 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 pain at the injection site. This discomfort is generally mild and should only last for a short time.

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 doctor or a member of the anaemia team.

Where will I get my Aranesp injections from?

When you first start this treatment you will usually be given a prescription from your renal consultant at the hospital clinic visit. The hospital consultant will let the renal anaemia team know that you have started this treatment and they will make arrangements for more injections to be delivered to you.

Your Aranesp will be delivered to your home, or an address that is convenient for you, by a home delivery company called Fresenius Medical Care (FMC). The hospital will continue to take full responsibility for your prescription and will co-ordinate any dose changes with FMC.

If your Aranesp prescription runs out and you have not been contacted about a new supply you can contact the renal anaemia team on 01904 721809 or pharmacy on 01904 725963 and we will be able to help.

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 nurse 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. If this is a problem, you can 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.

Who is Fresenius Medical Care (FMC)?

This company provides a helpful and professional delivery service to our patients. They will deliver your prescription for Aranesp to you at a convenient time and place.

FMC will try to make sure you are talking to someone you know. You are provided with a personal FMC co-ordinator who will phone you to discuss your needs and arrange your delivery.

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.

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 syringes and needles safely?

You must never throw a used syringe or pen 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 needle and syringe safely for you.

If you are administering the injections to yourself then you should dispose of the needle and syringe 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 needles and syringes 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.

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.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Please telephone or email if you
require this information in a different
language or format

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