



Medicine series

Practice details

# Darbepoetin

- Keep this leaflet safe, as you may need to refer to it again.
- Please ask your vet or veterinary nurse if you have any further questions.
- This medicine has been prescribed for your pet ONLY. Do not take it yourself or give it to another person or any other animal; it may harm them even if their symptoms appear to be the same.

The medicine you have been given for your dog or cat is called darbepoetin. It may have a trade name such as Aranesp®, but often will just be called darbepoetin.

## What is darbepoetin?

Darbepoetin is a synthetic form of a hormone (erythropoietin) usually produced by the kidneys to stimulate the production of new red blood cells (oxygen-carrying blood cells) by the bone marrow. It is used in patients that have abnormally low levels of red blood cells, a condition referred to as 'anaemia'.

## Why has my pet been prescribed darbepoetin?

Darbepoetin is used in veterinary patients to treat certain types of anaemia. Anaemia can have many different causes, such as kidney failure, cancer or viral infections.

## How should I store darbepoetin?

This medicine should be stored in a refrigerator. For safety, *all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children.*

## How do I give darbepoetin to my pet?

Darbepoetin has to be given by injection subcutaneously (under the skin). Your vet or veterinary nurse will show you how to do this.

## How long will my pet need to take darbepoetin?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients. Regular blood tests will be required to monitor the response of your pet to treatment. Injections will be needed less often as levels of red blood cells return to normal. Even if treatment is successful, ongoing injections may still be required for maintenance.

## What should I do if I run out of darbepoetin?

Try not to run out. Make sure you order more from your vet if your supply is getting low. If you do run out, contact your own vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

## What should I do if I miss a dose?

If a dose is missed, give the medication as soon as possible. However, it is best to skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your pet's next scheduled dose. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the total stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

## What should I do if my pet is accidentally given too many doses?

**Contact your vet immediately** if your pet receives an overdose of darbepoetin. There is limited information available on darbepoetin overdose in veterinary patients, but in people an overdose can cause serious heart problems.

## Can my pet have darbepoetin if I am already giving them other drugs?

Tell your vet if you are giving your pet any other medications, even if you think they already know. This includes herbal or off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop, pharmacy or health store.

## What are the possible side effects of darbepoetin for my pet?

Rarely, darbepoetin can cause an allergic reaction that results in a skin rash at the injection site, fever, mouth and nose ulcers and joint pain (without any joint swelling). If your pet shows *any* unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet.

## What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking darbepoetin?

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, you should not give any further doses and should contact your vet as soon as possible for advice.

## What should I do if a person accidentally injects themselves with this drug?

If a person accidentally takes your pet's medication, the person should be taken to the local hospital **immediately**. Take this leaflet and any remaining drug/the syringe (even if it is empty) with you.

## Whom do I contact if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about this drug or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about darbepoetin.

## The Prescribing Cascade

This medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is used by vets under the 'prescribing cascade'. The medicine is not authorized by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for use in dogs/cats/pets. Your vet can explain the 'prescribing cascade' in further detail to you and also explain why they are prescribing this drug for your pet. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you understand the reasons that the drug is being prescribed and its possible complications, before the treatment is issued.

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