



NEBRASKA CANCER SPECIALISTS

the Physicians of Oncology Hematology West

Elspar®

Generic name: Asparaginase

Other names: L-asparaginase

Drug type: Elspar is an anti-cancer/cytotoxic chemotherapy drug.

How this drug is given:

- Asparaginase is given as an injection into a large muscle (intramuscular or IM).

Side effects:

Important things to remember about the side effects of asparaginase:

- Most people do not experience all of the side effects listed.
- Side effects are almost always reversible and will usually go away after treatment is complete.
- There are many options to help minimize or prevent side effects.

The following side effects are common for patients receiving asparaginase:

- Fever, chills
- Nausea and vomiting
- Allergic reaction, (sudden onset of wheezing, itching, rash, face swelling, agitation, low blood pressure). You will be monitored closely for this reaction.
- Poor appetite
- Stomach cramping
- Central neurotoxicity: excessive sleepiness, depression, hallucinations, agitation, disorientation or seizure

These are less common for patients receiving asparaginase:

- Mouth sores
- Pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas) in up to 10% of patients. Mainly noted in blood tests that return to normal after therapy is discontinued. Rarely may be severe causing symptoms. Symptoms of acute pancreatitis include: (pain in the upper abdomen that worsens with eating, swollen and tender abdomen, nausea, vomiting, fever, and rapid pulse)
- Blood test abnormalities (Increased blood glucose level)
- Increase in blood tests measuring liver function; which return to normal once treatment is discontinued.
- Blood clotting disorders, increases risk of both bleeding and clotting

When to contact your doctor or health care provider:

Contact your health care provider ***immediately***, day or night, if you should experience any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 101° F or higher, chills (possible signs of infection).

The following symptoms require medical attention, but are not an emergency. Contact your health care provider ***within 24 hours*** of noticing any of the following:

- Nausea (interferes with ability to eat and unrelieved with prescribed medication)
- Vomiting (vomiting more than 4-5 times in a 24 hour period)
- Persistent upper abdominal pain or pain that worsens with eating
- Abdominal swelling
- Diarrhea (4-6 episodes in a 24-hour period)
- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Swelling, redness and/or pain in one leg or arm and not the other
- Extreme fatigue (unable to carry on self-care activities)
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes
- Unusual thirst, need to urinate frequently
- Confusion, excessive sleepiness, hallucinations (seeing, hearing or feeling things that are not there), agitation, or disorientation (not able to recognize familiar surroundings)

Always inform your health care provider if you experience any unusual symptoms.