



# NEBRASKA CANCER SPECIALISTS

*the Physicians of Oncology Hematology West*

## Epirubicin

**Trade names:** Ellence™

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

### How this drug is given:

- Epirubicin is given through an infusion into a vein (intravenous, IV).
- Epirubicin is a vesicant. A vesicant is a chemical that causes extensive tissue damage and blistering if it escapes from the vein. If you notice redness or swelling at the IV site while you are receiving epirubicin, alert your nurse immediately.

### Side effects:

Important things to remember about the side effects of epirubicin:

- 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 epirubicin:

**Early:** (within one week after treatment begins)

- Pain along the site where the medication was given
- Nausea or vomiting
- Urine may appear red for 1-2 days

**Later:** (within two weeks after treatment begins)

- Low blood counts. Your white and red blood cells and platelets may temporarily decrease. This can put you at increased risk for infection, anemia and/or bleeding.
- Mouth sores
- Hair loss on the scalp or elsewhere on the body. Most patients do lose some or all of their hair during their treatment. But your hair will grow back after treatment is completed.
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fatigue
- Amenorrhea (loss or irregularity of menstrual cycle)

### These are less common side effects for patients receiving epirubicin:

**Early:** (within one week after treatment begins)

- Darkening of the skin where previous radiation treatment has been given.

**Later:** (within two weeks after treatment begins)

- Diarrhea
- Infection
- Darkening of the nail beds
- Conjunctivitis
- Problems with fertility - ability to bear children- this should be discussed with your doctor prior to therapy).

A serious but uncommon side effect of epirubicin can be interference with the pumping action of the heart.

There is a slight risk of developing a blood cancer such as leukemia years after taking epirubicin. Talk to your doctor about this risk.

**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)
- Blistering at the IV site
- Shortness of breath, wheezing, difficulty breathing, closing up of the throat, swelling of facial features, hives (possible allergic reaction).

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)
- Mouth sores (painful redness, swelling or ulcers)
- Diarrhea (4-6 episodes in a 24-hour period)
- Fast or irregular heart beats
- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Black or tarry stools, or blood in your stools or urine
- Extreme fatigue (unable to carry on self-care activities)
- Swelling of the feet or ankles
- Redness, itchiness or pus in eyes

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