

Interferon alfa- 2

in-ter-FEER-on

Brand Name: Roferon-A (2a), Intron A (2b)

Drug Class: Opportunistic Infection and Other Drugs

Interferons are substances that occur naturally in the body and that are secreted by certain cells in response to infection. Interferon alfa-2a, also known as Roferon-A, and interferon alfa-2b, also known as Intron A, are man-made interferons manufactured by recombinant DNA technology. These interferons belong to the class of drugs called biological response modifiers. This class of medicines stimulates the body's response to infection and disease. They also belong to the class of drugs called antineoplastics. Antineoplastics slow or stop the growth of cancer cells.

HIV/AIDS-Related Uses

Interferons alfa-2a and alfa-2b were approved by the FDA on November 21, 1988, for the treatment of AIDS-related Kaposi's sarcoma and hepatitis infection, especially hepatitis C. These infections occur more commonly in patients with HIV.

Dosage Form/Administration

Interferons alfa-2a and alfa-2b come in liquid form and powder form that is mixed with sterile water. Interferons alfa-2a and alfa-2b are given by injection into the muscle or vein or under the skin.

Contraindications

Individuals should tell a doctor about any medical problems before taking this medicine.

Possible Side Effects

Along with its desired effects, interferon alfa may cause some unwanted effects. Serious side effects of this medicine include confusion; mental depression; nervousness; numbness or tingling of fingers, toes, and face; trouble in sleeping; trouble in thinking or concentrating; black, tarry stools; blood in urine or stools; chest pain; cough or hoarseness accompanied by fever or chills; fever or chills (beginning after 3 weeks of treatment); headache; irregular heartbeat; lower back or side pain accompanied by fever or chills; muscle pain; numbness or tingling in the legs; pain, swelling or redness in the joints; painful or difficult urination accompanied by fever or chills; pinpoint red spots on skin; trouble speaking; or unusual bleeding or bruising. Individuals should tell a doctor if they have symptoms of any of these side effects.

Other side effects may not be serious and may

lessen or disappear with continued use of the medicine. Less serious side effects of this medicine include aching muscles, change in taste or metallic taste, fever and chills (should lessen after the first 1 or 2 weeks of treatment), general feeling of discomfort or illness, headache, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, skin rash, or unusual tiredness. Individuals should tell a doctor if these side effects continue or are bothersome.

Drug and Food Interactions

A doctor should be notified of any other medications being taken, including prescription, nonprescription (over-the-counter), or herbal medications.

Clinical Trials

For information on clinical trials that involve Interferon alfa-2, visit the ClinicalTrials.gov web site at <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov>. In the Search box, enter: Interferon alfa-2 AND HIV Infections.

Manufacturer Information

Interferon alfa-2
Roche Laboratories
340 Kingsland Street
Nutley, NJ 07110
(973) 235-5000

Interferon alfa-2
Schering - Plough Corp
2000 Galloping Hill Rd
Kenilworth, NJ 07033-0530
(800) 526-4099

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Manufacturer Information (cont.)

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For More Information

Contact your doctor or an AIDSinfo Health Information Specialist:

- Via Phone: 1-800-448-0440 Monday - Friday, 12:00 p.m. (Noon) - 5:00 p.m. ET
- Via Live Help: http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/live_help Monday - Friday, 12:00 p.m. (Noon) - 4:00 p.m. ET