

The content on the UpToDate website is not intended nor recommended as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your own physician or other qualified health care professional regarding any medical questions or conditions. The use of UpToDate content is governed by the [UpToDate Terms of Use](#). ©2017 UpToDate, Inc. All rights reserved.

Epirubicin: Patient drug information

Copyright 1978-2017 Lexicomp, Inc. All rights reserved.

(For additional information [see "Epirubicin: Drug information"](#))

Brand Names: US Ellence

Brand Names: Canada Ellence; Epirubicin for Injection; Epirubicin Hydrochloride Injection; Pharmorubicin

Warning

- This drug may cause very bad heart problems like heart failure. This can happen during care or months to years after you get this drug. Sometimes, these heart problems will not go away or may be deadly. The chance of heart problems may be raised if you are using other drugs that may cause heart problems or if you have ever had heart problems or radiation to the chest area, or if you have ever had this drug or other drugs like this one. Ask your doctor if you are not sure if any drugs you take may cause heart problems. Your chance of heart problems depends on your dose of this drug and your health problem. Heart problems may happen even if you do not have any risk factors. In children, the chance of heart problems later in life is raised. Call your doctor right away if you have cough, fast or slow heartbeat, a heartbeat that does not feel normal, swelling in the arms or legs, shortness of breath, sudden weight gain, or feeling very tired or weak.
- This drug may lower the ability of your bone marrow to make blood cells that your body needs. This can lead to needing a blood transfusion and very bad and sometimes deadly bleeding problems or infections. Tell your doctor right away if you have signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat; any bruising or bleeding; or if you feel very tired or weak.
- This drug may add to the chance of getting some types of cancer. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause tissue damage if the drug leaks from the vein. Tell your nurse if you have any redness, burning, pain, swelling, blisters, skin sores, or leaking of fluid where the drug is going into your body.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat breast cancer.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you have an allergy to epirubicin or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to any drugs like this one, any other drugs, foods, or other substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had, like rash; hives; itching; shortness of breath; wheezing; cough; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat; or any other signs.
- If you have any of these health problems: A heartbeat that is not normal, heart disease, or liver disease.
- If you have had a recent heart attack.
- If you are taking cimetidine.
- If you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- You may have more chance of getting an infection. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.
- You may bleed more easily. Be careful and avoid injury. Use a soft toothbrush and an electric razor.
- If you have upset stomach, throwing up, loose stools (diarrhea), or are not hungry, talk with your doctor. There may be ways to lower these side effects.
- Dehydration and electrolyte problems can happen in people who have diarrhea. Talk with the doctor about what to do to prevent dehydration and electrolyte problems.
- To help with mouth sores, use a soft toothbrush or cotton swabs and rinse the mouth. Do not use mouth rinses that have alcohol in them.
- If you have had daunorubicin, doxorubicin, epirubicin, idarubicin, or mitoxantrone before, talk with your doctor.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- You will need to have heart function tests while taking this drug. Talk with the doctor.
- Talk with your doctor before getting any vaccines. Use with this drug may either raise the chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- Blood clots have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these blood clots have been deadly. Talk with the doctor.
- If you have had or will be having radiation treatment, talk with your doctor. Worse side effects from radiation treatment have happened with this drug.
- If you are 70 years or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- This drug may affect sperm in men. This may affect being able to father a child. Talk with the doctor.
- If you are a man and have sex with a female who could get pregnant, protect her from pregnancy during care and for some time after care ends. Use birth control that you can trust. Talk with your doctor to see how long to use birth control after you stop this drug.
- If you are a man and your sex partner gets pregnant while you take this drug or within several months after your last dose, call your doctor right away.

- Periods may stop in women treated with this drug. This may not go back to normal. Women treated with this drug may go through menopause at a younger age than normal. Talk with your doctor.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant.
- Use birth control that you can trust to prevent pregnancy while taking this drug.
- If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Signs of bleeding like throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds; coughing up blood; blood in the urine; black, red, or tarry stools; bleeding from the gums; vaginal bleeding that is not normal; bruises without a reason or that get bigger; or any bleeding that is very bad or that you cannot stop.
- Very bad dizziness or passing out.
- Very upset stomach or throwing up.
- Very loose stools (diarrhea).
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Patients with cancer who take this drug may be at greater risk of getting a bad and sometimes deadly health problem called tumor lysis syndrome (TLS). Call your doctor right away if you have a fast heartbeat or a heartbeat that does not feel normal; any passing out; trouble passing urine; muscle weakness or cramps; upset stomach, throwing up, loose stools or not able to eat; or feel sluggish.
- Call your doctor right away if you have signs of a blood clot like chest pain or pressure; coughing up blood; shortness of breath; swelling, warmth, numbness, change of color, or pain in a leg or arm; or trouble speaking or swallowing.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Color of urine is orange or red for 1 to 2 days after getting this drug.
- Hot flashes.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Loose stools (diarrhea).
- Not hungry.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.

- Hair loss.
- Eye irritation.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Keep a list of all your drugs (prescription, natural products, vitamins, OTC) with you. Give this list to your doctor.
- Talk with the doctor before starting any new drug, including prescription or OTC, natural products, or vitamins.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Check with your pharmacist about how to throw out unused drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Use of UpToDate is subject to the [Subscription and License Agreement](#).