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## Pembrolizumab: Patient drug information

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(For additional information [see "Pembrolizumab: Drug information"](#) and [see "Pembrolizumab: Pediatric drug information"](#))

**Brand Names: US** Keytruda

**Brand Names: Canada** Keytruda

### What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat a type of skin cancer (melanoma).
- It is used to treat lung cancer.
- It is used to treat cancer of the head and neck.
- It is used to treat a type of lymphoma.
- 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 this drug or any 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 are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug or for 4 months after your last dose.

This drug may interact with other drugs or health problems.

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?

#### **For all uses of this drug:**

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses,

pharmacists, and dentists.

- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause very bad side effects. Sometimes these may be life-threatening. These may happen in the lungs, bowels, liver, kidney, pituitary gland, thyroid gland, or other parts of the body. Talk with the doctor.
- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes), talk with your doctor. This drug may raise blood sugar.
- Check your blood sugar as you have been told by your doctor.
- Tell your doctor if you have signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, more thirst, more hungry, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- Infusion reactions have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these could be very bad or life-threatening. Talk with the doctor.
- A very bad skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause very bad health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant.
- If you are a female, use birth control that you can trust to prevent pregnancy while taking this drug and for 4 months after your last dose.
- If you get pregnant while taking this drug or within 4 months after your last dose, call your doctor right away.

#### **For lymphoma:**

- If you are having a stem cell transplant, talk with your doctor. Some problems with stem cell transplants using stem cells from someone else (allogeneic) have happened after treatment with this drug. These problems can be very bad and can lead to death.

## **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 liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of kidney problems like unable to pass urine, change in how much urine is passed, blood in the urine, or a big weight gain.
- Signs of thyroid, pituitary, or adrenal gland problems. Some signs may be change in mood or the way you act, change in weight, constipation, deeper voice, dizziness, fainting, feeling cold, feeling very tired, hair loss, headache that lasts or is very bad, or lowered interest in sex.
- Signs of bowel problems like black, tarry, or bloody stools; fever; mucus in the stools; throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds; very bad belly pain; or very bad hard stools (constipation) or loose stools (diarrhea).
- Signs of electrolyte problems like mood changes, confusion, muscle pain or weakness, a heartbeat that does not feel normal, seizures, not hungry, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.

- Signs of lung or breathing problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough, or fever.
- Chest pain or pressure or a fast heartbeat.
- A heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Change in eyesight.
- Very bad joint pain.
- Very bad muscle pain or weakness.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Fever or chills.
- Flushing.
- Sweating a lot.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- White patches on the skin.

## **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:

- Feeling tired or weak.
- Muscle or joint pain.
- Bone pain.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Not hungry.
- Hard stools (constipation).
- Loose stools (diarrhea).
- Belly pain.
- Headache.
- Back pain.

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.

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