

Renal Services

Erythropoietin (EPO)

This is a drug to treat anaemia and should increase your blood count and energy levels

About your medicine

Many patients with kidney failure have a condition called anaemia. This means that they have a lack of red blood cells in their body. Blood is made up of a liquid part and small particles called cells. These cells can be red or white. Red cells carry oxygen around the body. Measuring the level of something called haemoglobin in the blood gives a guide as to the number of red cells and whether a person is anaemic.

One of the jobs the kidneys do is to manage the production of red blood cells in the body. To do this they make a substance called erythropoietin (EPO). When someone's kidneys don't work, the kidneys produce less EPO and so the person becomes anaemic.

The drug erythropoietin is an artificial version of this hormone which can boost the body to make red blood cells. Nearly all the people on dialysis takes this drug. There are different types of the drug but it does not matter which type you receive. Each type is available as different preparations, for example, pre-filled syringes or pens. The specialist nurse will decide which suits you best.

Taking your medicine

EPO needs to be given by injection through the skin. You will be taught how to inject yourself with EPO. If you have haemodialysis, your EPO will be administered by your nurse when you attend your dialysis sessions.

The dose varies from person to person. The doctors will use the level of haemoglobin in the blood to decide which dose to use. It is usual to inject a dose once a week, fortnightly or monthly, depending on the preparation you are prescribed.

Unwanted effects

As with all medicines, some people may suffer side effects. EPO may cause your



Patient Information

blood pressure to rise, especially at the beginning of treatment. It is important that your blood pressure is monitored.

Storing your medicine

Keep your medicines away from children. EPO needs to be kept in the fridge In its original container until it is time to be injected.

You should take the dose as recommended by your doctor. You will need regular blood tests to make sure that you are prescribed the correct dose.

If you have any further queries or concerns, please contact the Haemodialysis Unit 024 7696 7777

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 7777 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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