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2. Epogen

Epogen

Generic name: [epoetin alfa](#) [e-POE-e-tin-AL-fa]

Brand names: Epogen, [Procrit](#), [Retacrit](#)

Drug class: [Recombinant human erythropoietins](#)

Medically reviewed by [Sophia Entringer, PharmD](#). Last updated on May 1, 2024.

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What is Epogen?

Epogen is a man-made form of a protein that helps your body produce red blood cells. This protein may be reduced when you have [kidney failure](#) or use certain medications. When fewer red blood cells are produced, you can develop a condition called [anemia](#).

Epogen is used to treat anemia caused by chemotherapy or [chronic kidney disease](#), anemia caused by taking [zidovudine](#) to treat [HIV](#) (human immunodeficiency virus), or anemia due to other reasons.

Epogen is also used to reduce the need for red blood cell transfusions in people having certain types of surgery.

Warnings

Epogen can cause serious side effects, including [heart attack](#), blood clots, or stroke. Epoetin alfa may also speed up tumor growth, or shorten remission or survival time in some people. **Talk with your doctor about the risks and benefits of using Epogen.**

You should not use Epogen if you have uncontrolled [high blood pressure](#), or if you have ever had pure red cell aplasia (PRCA, a type of anemia) caused by using epoetin alfa or [darbepoetin alfa](#).

Call your doctor at once if you have signs of a blood clot: sudden numbness or weakness, problems with vision or speech, chest pain, trouble breathing, pain or cold feeling in an arm or leg.

Before taking this medicine

You should not use Epogen if you are allergic to epoetin alfa or darbepoetin alfa, or if:

- you have untreated or uncontrolled high blood pressure;
- you have had pure red cell aplasia (PRCA, a type of anemia) after using darbepoetin alfa or epoetin alfa; or
- you use an Epogen multi-dose vial and you are pregnant or breast-feeding.

Do not use Epogen from a multi-dose vial when giving medicine to a baby. The multi-dose vial contains an ingredient that can cause serious side effects or death in very young infants or premature babies.

Epogen may speed up tumor growth, or shorten remission or survival time in some people with certain types of cancer. Talk with your doctor about the risks and benefits of using epoetin alfa.

Tell your doctor if you have ever had:

- heart disease, high blood pressure;
- a heart attack, or blood clot;
- a seizure disorder;
- [phenylketonuria](#) (PKU); or
- kidney disease (or if you are on dialysis).

It is not known whether this medicine will harm an unborn baby. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.

It may not be safe to breast-feed while using this medicine. Ask your doctor about any risk.

Do not use Epogen from a multi-dose vial if you are pregnant or breast-feeding.

Epoetin alfa is made from donated human plasma and may contain viruses or other infectious agents. Donated plasma is tested and treated to reduce the risk of contamination, but there is still a small possibility it could transmit disease. Ask your doctor about any possible risk.

 [Epogen pregnancy and breastfeeding warnings](#) (more detail)

How should I use Epogen?

Use Epogen injection exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Follow all directions on your prescription label and read all medication guides or instruction sheets. Your doctor may occasionally change your dose. Use the medicine exactly as directed.

Epogen is injected under the skin, or as an infusion into a vein. A healthcare provider may teach you how to properly use the medication by yourself.

Read and carefully follow any Instructions for Use provided with your medicine. Do not use Epogen if you don't understand all instructions for proper use. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions.

Prepare your injection only when you are ready to give it. Do not use if the medicine has changed colors or has particles in it. Call your pharmacist for new medicine.

Do not shake this medicine or you may ruin it.

Call your doctor if you feel weak, tired, or light-headed. These may be signs that your body has stopped responding to Epogen.

You may need frequent medical tests to be sure this medicine is not causing harmful effects. Your injections may be delayed based on the results.

You may be given other medications to help prevent serious side effects. Keep using these medicines for as long as your doctor has prescribed.

If you need surgery, tell the surgeon ahead of time that you are using Epogen. You may need to use a medicine to prevent blood clots.

Epogen is only part of a complete treatment program that may also include a special diet. Follow your doctor's instructions very closely.

Store in the refrigerator and protect from light. **Do not freeze Epogen**, and throw away the medication if it has become frozen.

Each single-use vial (bottle) of this medicine is for one use only. Throw it away after one use, even if there is still medicine left inside. Throw away any leftover medicine in a multi-dose vial 21 days after the first use.

Use a needle and syringe only once and then place them in a puncture-proof "sharps" container. Follow state or local laws about how to dispose of this container. Keep it out of the reach of children and pets.

 [Detailed Epogen dosage information](#)

What happens if I miss a dose?

Call your doctor for instructions if you miss a dose of Epogen.

What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention or call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222.

What should I avoid while using Epogen?

Avoid driving or hazardous activity until you know how this medicine will affect you. Your reactions could be impaired.

Epogen side effects

Get emergency medical help if you have **signs of an allergic reaction to Epogen** ([hives](#), sweating, rapid pulse, wheezing, trouble breathing, severe [dizziness](#) or fainting, swelling in your face or throat) **or a severe skin reaction** (fever, [sore throat](#), burning eyes, skin pain, red or purple [skin rash](#) with blistering and peeling).

Epogen can cause serious side effects, including heart attack or stroke. **Seek emergency medical help if you have:**

- **heart attack symptoms** - chest pain or pressure, pain spreading to your jaw or shoulder, [nausea](#), sweating;
- **signs of a stroke** - sudden numbness or weakness (especially on one side of the body), sudden severe [headache](#), slurred speech, problems with vision or balance;
- **signs of a blood clot** - pain, swelling, warmth, redness, cold feeling, or pale appearance of an arm or leg; or
- **increased blood pressure** - severe headache, blurred vision, pounding in your neck or ears, [anxiety](#), nosebleed.

Call your doctor at once if you have:

- unusual tiredness;
- a seizure (convulsions);
- **high blood sugar** - increased thirst, increased urination, dry mouth, fruity breath odor;
- **low potassium** - leg cramps, [constipation](#), irregular heartbeats, fluttering in your chest, increased thirst or urination, numbness or tingling, muscle weakness or limp feeling; or
- **increased blood pressure** - severe headache, blurred vision, pounding in your neck or ears, anxiety, nosebleed.

Common Epogen side effects may include:

- increased blood pressure;
- joint pain, bone pain, muscle pain;
- itching or rash;
- fever, chills, cough;
- mouth pain, trouble swallowing;
- nausea, [vomiting](#);
- headache, dizziness;
- trouble sleeping;
- depressed mood;
- [weight loss](#); or
- pain or redness where the medicine was injected.

This is not a complete list of side effects and others may occur. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

 [Epogen side effects](#) (more detail)

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What other drugs will affect Epogen?

Other drugs may interact with epoetin alfa, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, [vitamins](#), and [herbal products](#). Tell your doctor about all your current medicines and any medicine you start or stop using.

 [Epogen drug interactions](#) (more detail)

Does Epogen interact with my other drugs?

Enter medications to view a detailed interaction report using our [Drug Interaction Checker](#).

Epogen

+

Enter a drug name

Add

Epogen Biosimilars

Biosimilar and interchangeable products are biological products that are highly similar to and have no clinically meaningful differences from the reference product.

Reference products

These are biological products that have already been approved by the FDA, against which biosimilar products are compared. There are 2 for Epogen.

Epogen/Procrit (epoetin alfa) - Amgen Inc.



Formulation type	Strength
Multi-Dose Vial	20,000 units/2 mL (10,000 units/mL)
Multi-Dose Vial	20,000 units/mL
Single-Dose Vial	10,000 units/mL
Single-Dose Vial	2,000 units/mL
Single-Dose Vial	3,000 units/mL
Single-Dose Vial	4,000 units/mL

View [Epogen/Procrit](#) information in detail.

Procrit (epoetin alfa) - Amgen Inc.



Epogen/Procrit, Procrit biosimilar products

Biosimilar products can only be dispensed in place of the **reference product** if the healthcare provider specifically prescribes the biosimilar product by name.

Pharmacy laws for biosimilar prescribing may vary by state

Retacrit (epoetin alfa-epbx) - Hospira Inc., a Pfizer Company



Popular FAQ

What are biosimilar drugs and how do they compare to biologics?



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Patient resources

Other brands

[Retacrit](#), [Procrit](#)

Professional resources

- [Epogen prescribing information](#)
- [Epoetin Alfa \(AHFS Monograph\)](#)

Other brands

[Retacrit](#), [Procrit](#)

Related treatment guides

- [Anemia Due to Chronic Kidney Disease](#)
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- [Anemia Prior to Surgery](#)
- [Anemia, Chemotherapy Induced](#)

- [Anemia, Drug Induced](#)

Further information

Remember, keep this and all other medicines out of the reach of children, never share your medicines with others, and use Epogen only for the indication prescribed.

Always consult your healthcare provider to ensure the information displayed on this page applies to your personal circumstances.

[Medical Disclaimer](#)


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DRUG STATUS

Availability

Rx Prescription only

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 Risk data available

CSA Schedule*

N/A Not a controlled drug



WADA Class

 Anti-Doping Classification



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