

Peginterferon alfa-2a & Ribavirin

[Peg-INTER-feer-on]
[Rye-bah-VYE-rin]
Pegasys RBV[®], Pegasys[®] + Copegus[®]

[http:// Liverinfo.com](http://Liverinfo.com)
your liver resource

How to use this medication

What is it



Interferons are proteins that are normally made by your body. Interferons fight viral infections. Peginterferon alfa-2a is a long acting type of interferon. Peginterferon alfa-2a is a medicine that helps to fight chronic viral infections like hepatitis C. Ribavirin is a medication that also fights hepatitis C.

Given by injection (peginterferon alfa-2a)



Peginterferon alfa-2a is given by injection once a week. You, a friend, or family member can be taught how to give the injection.

Given as tablets (ribavirin)



Ribavirin comes as 200 mg tablets. The normal dose is 2 to 4 tablets taken twice a day. Discuss with your doctor.

Be patient



Peginterferon alfa-2a and ribavirin are given for 24-48 weeks. The length of therapy depends on many factors. Please talk with your doctor.

What you need to do

Get regular blood tests



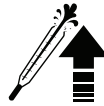
It is important to have your blood tested regularly. This is important to make sure the medication is working. It is also important to check your blood counts and liver.

Avoid alcohol



Alcohol can interfere with peginterferon alfa-2a. It is best to avoid alcohol.

Call your doctor/nurse if you have an infection



Peginterferon alfa-2a might make it harder for you to fight off infections. Contact your doctor or nurse if:

1. You develop a fever
2. You think you have an infection
3. You are given antibiotics to treat an infection

Don't get pregnant or breastfeed



Ribavirin can cause birth defects or stillbirth. Peginterferon alfa-2a has not been studied in pregnancy. It is important to make sure you are not pregnant before you start peginterferon alfa-2a and ribavirin. Discuss with your doctor or nurse.

Side effects & important facts

Flu-like symptoms



Fever, chills, sore muscles and joints, tiredness, and headaches are common within the first 1-2 days after each peginterferon alfa-2a injection.

Injection site reactions



Peginterferon alfa-2a can cause a reaction (redness, pain & itching) at the injection site. Tell your doctor or nurse if these are severe.

Tiredness & fatigue



Peginterferon alfa-2a can make you feel weak and tired.

Weight loss



Peginterferon alfa-2a can cause a loss of appetite and weight loss. Let your doctor or nurse know if you are losing weight while taking peginterferon alfa-2a.

Mood & behavioral problems



Let your doctor or nurse know if you feel irritable or anxious or experience worsening depression or thoughts of suicide while taking peginterferon alfa-2a.

Shortness of breath & chest pain



Tell your doctor or nurse if you develop shortness of breath or chest pain.

Hormone issues



Peginterferon alfa-2a has rarely been associated with thyroid and blood sugar problems.

Skin rash



Peginterferon alfa-2a & ribavirin may cause a rash. This is rare.

Hair loss



Peginterferon alfa-2a can rarely cause thinning or loss of the hair.

When should I call my doctor

Please call if you need to stop

- If you feel sick and want to stop
- If you are concerned about any side effects
- If you want to or have already stopped the medicine



Other reasons to call your doctor or nurse:



Chest pain or shortness of breath



Depression or thoughts of suicide



If you become pregnant



Changes in your vision



If you develop a rash