



Nelarabine (Arranon®)

Pronounce: nel-AY-re-been

Classification: antimetabolite

About Nelarabine (Arranon®)

Nelarabine interferes with DNA production. This stops cell growth and division, resulting in the slowing or stopping of cancer growth. Since cancer cells, in general, divide faster and with less error-correcting than healthy cells, cancer cells are more sensitive to this damage. Nelarabine is classified specifically as an adenosine deaminase inhibitor.

How to Take Nelarabine

Nelarabine is given through intravenous (IV, into a vein) infusion. The dose is based on your weight and your provider will decide how often you should receive this medication. You may be given additional intravenous fluids and medications to protect your kidneys prior to the infusion.

Nelarabine may interact with other medications, such as pentostatin, which is an adenosine deaminase inhibitor. Make sure that you tell your provider about all of the medications, vitamins, and supplements you are taking.

You, or anyone you live with, should avoid having live or live-attenuated vaccines while receiving this medication. These include herpes zoster (Zostavax) for shingles prevention, oral polio, measles, nasal flu vaccine (FluMist®), rotavirus, and yellow fever vaccines.

Possible Side Effects

There are a number of things you can do to manage the side effects of nelarabine. Talk to your care team about these recommendations. They can help you decide what will work best for you. These are some of the most common or important side effects:

Neurological Disorders

Severe neurologic reactions have been associated with nelarabine. Nelarabine can cause somnolence (extreme drowsiness), dizziness, headaches, confusion, seizures, and severe peripheral neuropathy (ranging from numbness to muscle weakness and paralysis). These side effects can be so severe that they can lead to coma and paralysis. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms it is necessary to contact your provider right away. Due to these side effects, you should not operate machinery or drive a car while receiving therapy.

Peripheral Neuropathy (Numbness or Tingling in the Hands and/or Feet)

[Peripheral neuropathy](#) is a toxicity that affects the nerves. It causes numbness or a tingling feeling in the hands and/or feet, often in the pattern of a stocking or glove. This can get progressively worse with additional doses of the medication. In some people, the symptoms slowly resolve after the medication is stopped, but for some, it never goes away completely. You should let your oncology care team know if you experience numbness or tingling in the hands and/or feet, as they may need to adjust the doses of your medication.

Low Red Blood Cell Count (Anemia)

Your red blood cells are responsible for carrying oxygen to the tissues in your body. When the [red cell count is low](#), you may feel tired or weak. You should let your oncology care team know if you experience any shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or pain in your chest. If the count gets too low, you may receive a blood transfusion.

Low Platelet Count (Thrombocytopenia)

Platelets help your blood clot, so when the [count is low](#) you are at a higher risk of bleeding. Let your oncology care team know if you have any excess bruising or bleeding, including nose bleeds, bleeding gums, or blood in your urine or stool. If the platelet count becomes too low, you may receive a transfusion of platelets.

- Do not use a razor (an electric razor is fine).
- Avoid contact sports and activities that can result in injury or bleeding.
- Do not take aspirin (salicylic acid), non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) such as Motrin/Advil (ibuprofen), Aleve (naproxen), Celebrex (celecoxib), etc. as these can all increase the risk of bleeding. Please consult with your healthcare team regarding the use of these agents and all over-the-counter medications/supplements while on therapy.
- Do not floss or use toothpicks and use a soft-bristle toothbrush to brush your teeth.

Low White Blood Cell Count (Leukopenia or Neutropenia)

White blood cells (WBC) are important for fighting infection. While receiving treatment, your [WBC count can drop](#), putting you at a higher risk of getting an infection. You should let your doctor or nurse know right away if you have a fever (temperature greater than 100.4°F or 38°C), sore throat or cold, shortness of breath, cough, burning with urination, or a sore that doesn't heal.

Tips to preventing infection:

- [Washing hands](#), both yours and your visitors, is the best way to prevent the spread of infection.
- Avoid large crowds and people who are sick (i.e.: those who have a cold, fever, or cough or live with someone with these symptoms).
- When working in your yard, wear protective clothing including long pants and gloves.
- Do not handle pet waste.
- Keep all cuts or scratches clean.
- Shower or bathe daily and perform frequent [mouth care](#).
- Do not cut cuticles or ingrown nails. You may wear nail polish, but not fake nails.
- Ask your oncology care team before scheduling dental appointments or procedures.
- Ask your oncology care team before you, or someone you live with has any vaccinations.

Fatigue

[Fatigue](#) is very common during cancer treatment and is an overwhelming feeling of exhaustion that is not usually relieved by rest. While on cancer treatment, and for a period after, you may need to adjust your schedule to manage fatigue. Plan times to rest during the day and conserve energy for more important activities. Exercise can help combat fatigue; a simple daily walk with a friend can help. Talk to your healthcare team for helpful tips on dealing with this side effect.

Reproductive Concerns

Exposure of an unborn child to this medication could cause birth defects, so you should not become pregnant or father a child while on this medication. Effective birth control is necessary for men and women during treatment. Men should also use condoms for 3 months after treatment has ended. Even if your menstrual cycle

stops or you believe you are not producing sperm, you could still be fertile and conceive. You should not breastfeed while receiving this medication.

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