

Medication Information Sheet

filgrastim (fill-**GRA**-stim)

This document provides general information about your medication. It does not replace the advice of your health care professional. Always discuss your therapy with your health care professional and refer to the package insert for more details.

Other Name: Neupogen®, Grastofil®, Nivestym™

Appearance: Clear, colourless solution

What is this medication for?

- Filgrastim is used to increase the growth of your white blood cells, which help your body fight against infection.
- This medication may also be used to increase your white blood cells before a stem cell transplant. It may also help your white blood cells recover after a bone marrow or stem cell transplant.
- Filgrastim is available as a biosimilar medication. See our [biosimilar](#) pamphlet for more information.

What should I do before I have this medication?

- Tell your doctor if you have or had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have or had:
 - heart disease,
 - sickle cell anemia, or
 - any allergies

Remember to:

- Tell your health care team about all of the other medications you are taking.
- Keep taking other medications that have been prescribed for you, unless you have been told not to by your health care team.

How will this medication affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?

Talk to your health care team about:

- How this medication may affect your sexual health.
- How this medication may affect your ability to have a baby, if this applies to you.

This medication has not been studied in pregnant women, and its effects on unborn babies are not known. Tell your health care team if you or your partner are pregnant, become pregnant during treatment, or are breastfeeding.

- If there is **any** chance of pregnancy happening, you and your partner should speak with your health care team before using this medication.
- Do not breastfeed while on this medication.

How is this medication given?

- This medication is usually given daily by injection under the skin at the same time each day.
- The injection should be used only on specified days. Talk to your healthcare team about your filgrastim treatment schedule.
- If you (or your caregiver) are giving the injection, your health care team will teach you (or your caregiver) how to give the injection. Be sure you understand how to measure the **exact dose of filgrastim** that is needed, as well as the proper method for preparing and injecting the medication. Talk to your nurse or pharmacist for more information.
- You may take the medication out of the refrigerator about 30 minutes before using it, so that the injection is more comfortable.
- If you miss your filgrastim dose, talk to your health care team to find out what to do.
- If you take too much of your medication by accident, or if you think a child or a pet may have swallowed your medication, you must call the Ontario Poison Control Center right away at: 1-800-268-9017.

What else do I need to know while on this medication?

- **Will this medication interact with other medications or natural health products?**
 - This medication can interact with other medications, vitamins, foods and natural health products. Interactions can make the treatment not work as well or cause severe side effects.
 - Tell your health care team about all of your:
 - prescription and over-the-counter (non-prescription) medications and all other drugs, such as cannabis/marijuana (medical or recreational)
 - natural health products such as vitamins, herbal teas, homeopathic medicines, and other supplements
 - Check with your health care team before starting or stopping any of them.

What to DO while on this medication:

- DO check with your health care team before getting any vaccinations, surgery, dental work or other medical procedures.
- DO talk to your health care team about your risk of getting other cancers after this treatment.
- DO tell your health care team about any signs of infection.

What NOT to DO while on this medication:

- DO NOT smoke or drink alcohol while on treatment without talking to your health care team first. Smoking and drinking can make side effects worse and make your treatment not work as well.

How should I safely store this medication?

- Keep in the refrigerator, but do not freeze. Keep out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- Used needle covers, needles and syringes should never be reused and must always be disposed of in a puncture-proof or “sharps” container given to you by your pharmacist.
- Ask your pharmacist for help to properly dispose of these items, including the filled container.
- Do not throw out any unused medications at home. Bring them to your pharmacy to be thrown away safely.

What are the side effects of this medication?

The following table lists side effects that you may have when getting filgrastim. The table is set up to list the most common side effects first and the least common last. It is unlikely that you will have all of the side effects listed and you may have some that are not listed.

Read over the side effect table so that you know what to look for and when to get help. Refer to this table if you experience any side effects while on filgrastim.

If you develop signs or symptoms of an **infection** (if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is above 38.3°C or 100.9°F at any time OR above 38.0°C or 100.4°F for at least one hour, chills, sore throat), call your doctor or get emergency medical help **right away**.

Common Side Effects (more than 10 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p>Mild joint, muscle, back or bone pain</p> <p>What to look for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New pain in your muscles, joints or bones. <p>What to do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest often and try light exercise (such as walking) as it may help. • Take pain medication (acetaminophen or opioids such as codeine, morphine, hydromorphone, oxycodone) as prescribed. • Always check your temperature to see if you have a fever before taking acetaminophen (Tylenol®), ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Fever can be a sign of infection that may need treatment right away. ◦ If you take these medications before you check for fever, they may lower your temperature and you may not know you have an infection. <p>How to check for fever:</p> <p>Keep a digital (electronic) thermometer at home and take your temperature if you feel hot or unwell (for example, chills, headache, mild pain).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have a fever if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is: 	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>

Common Side Effects (more than 10 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time OR ◦ 38.0°C (100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour. <p>Ask your health care team for the Pain pamphlet for more information.</p>	

Other rare, but serious side effects are possible.

If you experience ANY of the following, speak to your cancer health care provider or get emergency medical help right away:

- irregular heartbeat, chest pain and/or shortness of breath
- cough or coughing up blood
- swelling or puffiness, sudden weight gain, difficulty breathing, fainting, severe bloating in the belly and feeling of fullness, or feeling very tired
- dizziness or fainting during or shortly after the medication is given
- rash, chest or throat tightness during or shortly after the medication is given
- redness, swelling, itching or bruising where the medication was given
- swollen ankles, blood in urine (pee) or brown coloured urine, or passing little or no urine
- pain in the left upper belly or shoulder
- severe chest, belly or joint pain
- rash on the skin that looks like purple or red spots or bumps, clusters of small dots or hives. It may also be itchy.
- unusual bruising or bleeding (such as nose bleeds or bleeding from the gums, black coloured stools (poo) or blood in your stools (poo))

Who do I contact if I have questions or need help?

My cancer health care provider is: _____

During the day I should contact: _____

Evenings, weekends and holidays: _____

Other Notes:

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For more links on how to manage your symptoms go to www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms.

The information set out in the medication information sheets, regimen information sheets, and symptom management information (for patients) contained in the Drug Formulary (the "Formulary") is intended to be used by health professionals and patients for informational purposes only. The information is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, drug interactions or side effects of a certain drug, nor should it be used to indicate that use of a particular drug is safe, appropriate or effective for a given condition.

A patient should always consult a healthcare provider if he/she has any questions regarding the information set out in the Formulary. The information in the Formulary is not intended to act as or replace medical advice and should not be relied upon in any such regard. All uses of the Formulary are subject to clinical judgment and actual prescribing patterns may not follow the information provided in the Formulary.