

# calaspargase pegol

**Pronunciation:** kal-AS-par-jase-PEG-ol

**Other Name(s):** Asparlas®

**Appearance:** clear, colourless solution for injection

This handout gives general information about this cancer medication.

You will learn:

- who to contact for help
- what the medication is
- how it is given
- what to expect while on medication



This handout was created by Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) together with patients and their caregivers who have also gone through cancer treatment. It is meant to help support you through your cancer treatment and answer some of your questions.

**This information does not replace the advice of your health care team. Always talk to your health care team about your treatment.**

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

## What is this treatment for?

Calaspargase pegol is used to treat a certain type of blood cancer called acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL). It is usually given together with other medication(s).

## What should I do before I start this treatment?

Tell your health care team if you have or had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have / had:

- liver or pancreas problems,
- blood clots or bleeding problems,
- diabetes or high blood sugar, or
- any allergies (or if you cannot tolerate asparaginase).



### 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.

You will have a blood test to check for hepatitis B before starting treatment. See the [Hepatitis B and Cancer Medications](#) pamphlet for more information.

## How is this treatment given?

- This medication is given through an IV (injected into a vein). Talk to your health care team about your treatment schedule.
- If you missed your treatment appointment, talk to your health care team to find out what to do.

## Other medications you may be given with this treatment

### To Prevent Allergic Reaction

You will be given medications before your treatment to help prevent allergic reactions before they start.

- There are different types of medications to stop allergic reactions. They are called:
  - ◊ antihistamines (such as diphenhydramine or Benadryl®)
  - ◊ analgesics/antipyretics (such as acetaminophen or Tylenol®)
  - ◊ H2 blockers (such as ranitidine or famotidine)
  - ◊ corticosteroids (such as prednisone)

### To Prevent Tumor Lysis Syndrome (TLS)

TLS can happen when a large number of cancer cells die quickly and your body cannot get rid of them fast enough. TLS can make you very sick. Ask your health care team if you are at risk for TLS.

If you are at risk for TLS, you may be given medications before your calaspargase pegol treatment to help prevent it.

- These are called anti-uricemics (such as allopurinol), or others.

**DO this while on treatment**

- ✓ DO check with your health care team before getting any vaccinations, surgery, dental work or other medical procedures.
- ✓ DO consider asking someone to drive you to and from the hospital on your treatment days. You may feel drowsy or dizzy after your treatment.
- ✓ DO test your blood sugar regularly if you are taking any medications for diabetes. This treatment may cause changes in your blood sugar levels.

**DO NOT do this while on treatment**

- ✗ DO NOT use tobacco products (such as smoking cigarettes or vaping) 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.
- ✗ DO NOT start any complementary or alternative therapies, such as acupuncture or homeopathic medications, without checking with your health care team.
- ✗ DO NOT take any other medications, such as vitamins, over-the-counter (non-prescription) drugs, or natural health products without checking with your health care team.

## Will this treatment interact with other medications or natural health products?

Yes, the medications in this regimen 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
- 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.

If you are taking a blood thinner (such as warfarin), your health care team may need extra blood tests and may change your dose.



### Talk to your health care team **BEFORE** taking or using these :

- Anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen (Advil<sup>®</sup> or Motrin<sup>®</sup>), naproxen (Aleve<sup>®</sup>) or Aspirin<sup>®</sup>.
- Over-the-counter products such as dimenhydrinate (Gravol<sup>®</sup>)
- Natural health products such as St. John's Wort
- Supplements such as vitamin C
- Grapefruit juice
- Alcoholic drinks
- Tobacco
- All other drugs, such as marijuana or cannabis (medical or recreational)

## What to do if you feel unwell, have pain, a headache or a fever

- ✓ **Always** check your temperature to see if you have a fever **before** taking any medications for fever or pain (such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®)).
  - 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.

### How to check for fever:

Keep a digital (electronic) thermometer at home and take your temperature if you feel hot or unwell (for example, chills, headache, mild pain).

- You have a fever if your temperature taken **in your mouth (oral temperature)** is:
  - 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.



### If you do have a fever :

- ✓ **Try to contact your health care team. If you are not able to talk to them for advice, you MUST get emergency medical help right away.**
- ✓ Ask your health care team for the [Fever](#) pamphlet for more information.

If you do not have a fever but have mild symptoms such as headache or mild pain:

- ✓ Ask your health care team about the right medication for you. **Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)** is a safe choice for most people.



**Talk to your health care team before you start taking** ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or ASA (Aspirin®), as they may increase your chance of bleeding or interact with your cancer treatment.



Talk to your health care team if you already take **low dose aspirin** for a medical condition (such as a heart problem). It may still be safe to take.

## How will this treatment affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?

**Talk to your health care team about:**

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

This treatment may harm an unborn baby. 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 together must use **2 effective forms of birth control** at the same time until at least **3 months** after your last treatment dose. Talk to your health care team about which birth control options are best for you.
- This medication may make hormonal birth control, such as birth control pills, less effective (not work as well). If you choose to use a hormonal birth control, make sure you also use a barrier or non-hormonal birth control method (such as condoms). Talk to your health care team about the best birth control options for you.
- Do not breastfeed while on this treatment and for **3 months** after your last dose.

## What are the side effects of this treatment?

The following table lists side effects that you may have when getting calaspargase pegol treatment. Some of these side effects may also be from other chemotherapy that is given with calaspargase pegol. 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 calaspargase pegol treatment.

Very Common Side Effects (50 or more out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Low levels of albumin in your blood</b></p> <p>(May be severe)</p> <p>Albumin is a protein that is found in the blood. It helps to maintain pressure in the blood vessels and move substances, such as hormones and medications through your body. Your health care team may check your levels of albumin with a blood test. Low albumin may not cause any symptoms unless your level is very low.</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fatigue (feeling tired)</li> <li>• Muscle weakness or cramps</li> <li>• Loss of appetite</li> <li>• Swelling in your ankles or legs</li> <li>• Swelling in your belly (if you also have liver problems)</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>If you have any of these symptoms, talk to your health care team. If you have swelling in your belly, get emergency medical help right away.</b></p>	<p>If you have any of these symptoms, talk to your health care team. If you have swelling in your belly, get emergency medical help right away.</p>
<p><b>Liver problems</b></p> <p>(May be severe)</p> <p>Your health care team may check your liver function with a blood test. Liver changes do not usually cause any symptoms.</p>	<p>Get emergency medical help right away.</p>



<b>Very Common Side Effects (50 or more out of 100 people)</b>	
<b>Side effects and what to do</b>	<b>When to contact health care team</b>
<p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rarely, you may develop yellowish skin or eyes, unusually dark pee or pain on the right side of your belly. This may be severe.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>If you have any symptoms of liver problems, get emergency medical help right away.</b></p>	

<b>Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)</b>	
<b>Side effects and what to do</b>	<b>When to contact health care team</b>
<p><b>Too much or too little salt in your body</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muscle spasms, cramping, weakness, twitching, or convulsions.</li> <li>• Irregular heartbeat, confusion or blood pressure changes.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>Get emergency medical help right away for severe symptoms.</b></p>	<p>Get emergency medical help right away for severe symptoms.</p>
<p><b>High blood sugar</b></p> <p>(May be severe)</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may feel thirsty.</li> <li>• You may pee more often than usual.</li> <li>• You may feel tired or sleepy.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your health care team may do a blood test to check your blood sugar level.</li> <li>• You may be told to change your diet or given medication to lower your blood sugar.</li> <li>• If you have diabetes, check your blood sugar regularly. Your health care team may ask you to check it more often than usual.</li> </ul>	<p>Contact your health care team as soon as possible (office hours).</p>

Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Low neutrophils (white blood cells) in the blood (neutropenia)</b></p> <p>(May be severe)</p> <p>When neutrophils are low, you are at risk of getting an infection more easily. Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Neutropenia (Low white blood cell count)</a> pamphlet for more information.</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you feel hot or unwell (for example if you have chills or a new cough), you <b>must</b> check your temperature to see if you have a fever.</li> <li>• Do not take medications that treat a fever before you take your temperature (for example, Tylenol® (acetaminophen), or Advil® (ibuprofen)).</li> <li>• Do not eat or drink anything hot or cold right before taking your temperature.</li> </ul> <p>You have a fever if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time</li> <li>OR</li> <li>• 38.0°C (100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>If your health care team has told you that you have low neutrophils:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash your hands often to prevent infection.</li> <li>• Check with your health care team before getting any vaccines, surgeries, medical procedures or visiting your dentist.</li> <li>• Keep a digital thermometer at home so you can easily check for a fever.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have a fever:</b></p> <p><b>If you have a fever, try to contact your health care team. If you are unable to talk to the team for advice, you must get emergency medical help right away.</b></p>	<p>If you have a fever, try to contact your health care team. If you are unable to talk to the team for advice, you <b>MUST</b> get emergency medical help right away.</p>

Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Bleeding; low platelets in the blood</b></p> <p>(May be severe)</p> <p>When your platelets are low, you are at risk for bleeding and bruising. Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Low Platelet Count</a> pamphlet for more information.</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch for signs of bleeding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ bleeding from your gums</li> <li>◦ unusual or heavy nosebleeds</li> <li>◦ bruising easily or more than normal</li> <li>◦ black coloured stools (poo) or blood in your stools (poo)</li> <li>◦ coughing up red or brown coloured mucus</li> <li>◦ dizziness, constant headache or changes in your vision</li> <li>◦ heavy vaginal bleeding</li> <li>◦ red or pink coloured urine (pee)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>If your health care team has told you that you have low platelets:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell your pharmacist that your platelet count may be low before taking any prescriptions or over-the-counter medication.</li> <li>• Check with your healthcare team before you go to the dentist.</li> <li>• Take care of your mouth and use a soft toothbrush.</li> <li>• Try to prevent cuts and bruises.</li> <li>• Ask your health care team what activities are safe for you.</li> <li>• Your treatment may have to be delayed if you have low platelets. Your health care team may recommend a blood transfusion.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have signs of bleeding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have a small bleed, clean the area with soap and water or a saline (saltwater) rinse. Apply pressure for at least 10 minutes.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have bleeding that does not stop or is severe (very heavy), you must get emergency medical help right away.</b></p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if you have any signs of bleeding. If you have bleeding that doesn't stop or is severe (very heavy), you <b>MUST</b> get emergency help right away.</p>

Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Low blood sugar</b></p> <p>The medication can cause the level of sugar (also called glucose) in your blood to drop too low. Low blood sugar may be more likely to happen if you are already being treated for diabetes.</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <p>People show different signs when their blood sugar is low. Some signs of low blood sugar are listed below.</p> <p>You may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• look pale or sweat</li> <li>• feel shaky or trembly</li> <li>• feel anxious, nervous or irritable</li> <li>• have a fast heartbeat</li> <li>• feel hungry</li> <li>• feel dizzy or weak</li> </ul> <p>If your blood sugar level drops very low (severe low blood sugar), you may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feel confused</li> <li>• faint (pass out)</li> <li>• have a seizure</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check your blood sugar if you have diabetes and have these symptoms.</li> <li>• If you do not have diabetes, talk to your health care team about what to do if you have these symptoms.</li> </ul> <p><b>To treat low blood sugar (if you have diabetes):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take 3 to 4 glucose tablets, 1 tablespoon of sugar or honey, or 3/4 cup of juice or regular soft drink.</li> <li>• Wait 15 minutes and recheck your blood sugar with your blood glucose monitor.</li> <li>• If your blood sugar is still low, treat it again.</li> <li>• Keep repeating these steps until your blood sugar is at your usual range</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have severe low blood sugar, you or your caregiver will need to get emergency medical help for you right away.</b></p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve. Get emergency medical help right away if it is severe.</p>

Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Higher than normal cholesterol or fat levels in the blood</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High cholesterol or fat levels usually do not cause any symptoms.</li> <li>• Since your treatment may cause high cholesterol, your health care team may do regular blood tests to check your cholesterol levels.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your health care team may give you medication to treat high cholesterol or fat levels.</li> <li>• If you already take medication for high cholesterol or fat levels, your health care team may change the amount or type of medication you take.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>
<p><b>Mouth sores</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Round, painful, white or gray sores inside your mouth that can occur on the tongue, lips, gums, or inside your cheeks.</li> <li>• In more severe cases they may make it hard to swallow, eat or brush your teeth.</li> <li>• They may last for 3 days or longer.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>To help prevent mouth sores:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take care of your mouth by gently brushing and flossing regularly.</li> <li>• Rinse your mouth often with a homemade mouthwash.</li> <li>• To make a homemade mouthwash, mix 1 teaspoonful of baking soda and 1 teaspoonful of salt in 4 cups (1L) of water.</li> <li>• Do not use store-bought mouthwashes, especially those with alcohol, because they may irritate your mouth.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have mouth sores:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid hot, spicy, acidic, hard or crunchy foods.</li> <li>• Your doctor may prescribe a special mouthwash to relieve mouth sores and prevent infection.</li> <li>• Talk to your health care team as soon as you notice mouth or lip sores or if it hurts to eat, drink or swallow.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your health care team as soon as you notice mouth or lip sores or if it hurts to eat, drink or swallow.</p>

Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Oral Care (Mouth Care)</a> pamphlet for more information.	

### Other rare, but serious side effects are possible with this treatment.

If you have **any** of the following, talk to your cancer health care team or get emergency medical help right away:

- signs of an allergic reaction: rash, swollen lips, face or tongue, chest and throat tightness
- severe belly cramps or pain, belly tenderness, diarrhea or blood in your poo
- fast weight gain that is not normal for you, swelling in the belly area
- pain in the centre of your belly that may spread to your back
- swelling and hardening of a vein in your arm or leg
- new cough, problems breathing, pain in your chest or coughing up blood
- trouble seeing, speaking, or using your arms and legs
- severe headache, confusion
- changes in your vision
- seizures

For more information on how to manage your symptoms ask your health care provider, or visit: <https://www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms>.

## Notes

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**February 2025** New patient information sheet

*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.*