

UW Medicine



Aldesleukin

Proleukin

This handout describes aldesleukin, a drug that is used to treat kidney cancer and melanoma (skin cancer) that have metastasized (spread to other parts of the body). It includes what to do about side effects, what to avoid during treatment, and when to call for help.

What is aldesleukin?

The drug *aldesleukin* is used to treat kidney cancer and *melanoma* (skin cancer) that has *metastasized* (spread to other parts of the body). The drug stimulates your body's immune system to boost its natural defenses against cancer cells.

Aldesleukin is also called *high-dose interleukin-2*. The brand name is Proleukin.

How is it given?

Aldesleukin is most often given *intravenously* (injected into a vein).



Talk with your cancer care provider or if you have any questions about your treatment.

What side effects can I expect?

Side effects usually occur while you are being treated in the hospital. They often improve within 2 to 3 days after you stop treatment.

The table on the next page shows common side effects that can occur after aldesleukin treatment. It explains what to do about them when you are at home.

You may also have other side effects that are not listed. Report any symptoms to your provider.

Side Effects	What to Do	Treatments
Low blood pressure	Your provider will likely ask you to stop all blood pressure medicines starting on the day you are admitted for aldesleukin treatment. Based on your blood pressure when you are discharged from the hospital, your provider may ask you to either restart or modify your blood pressure medicine, or to continue not taking them until your next clinic visit.	Follow the instructions you received when you left the hospital.
Diarrhea	Remember to drink fluids and eat healthful foods.	<p>Try loperamide (Imodium):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take 4 mg (2 tablets) after the first loose stool. • Take 2 mg (1 tablet) after every loose stool after that. • Do not take more than 16 mg (8 tablets) a day. <p>You can buy this medicine without a prescription.</p>
Leg swelling or shortness of breath, or both	<p>It may be helpful to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate your legs while resting. • Wear compression stockings. <p>Your provider may take a chest X-ray if you still feel short of breath after you leave the hospital.</p>	Your provider may prescribe furosemide (Lasix) for swelling upon hospital discharge. You can stop taking the medicine when swelling is down and your weight has returned to normal. Your provider may ask you to take potassium supplements when you take furosemide.

Side Effects	What to Do	Treatments
Nausea or vomiting, or both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Try dry foods, such as toast or crackers. • Avoid fatty or fried foods. 	Your provider may prescribe anti-nausea medicines such as ondansetron (Zofran) , 8 mg every 8 hours, or prochlorperazine (Compazine) , 10 mg every 6 hours. You can take these as needed or to prevent symptoms.
Skin peeling or itching, or both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use mild soaps without perfumes or conditioners. • Wear clothing that is loose and soft. • Tell your provider if you have open sores from the skin peeling. 	For dry, flaking skin, use a moisturizing lotion such as Lubriderm or Aveeno every day. For itching, try an antihistamine such as cetirizine (Zyrtec) , loratadine (Claritin) , or fexofenadine (Allegra) . You can also try diphenhydramine (Benadryl) , but it may make you sleepy. You may take it at bedtime.

Is there anything special I need to do during treatment?

- Avoid taking products that contain **aspirin**. These include Alka-Seltzer, Bayer, Ecotrin, Excedrin, Nyquil, Pepto Bismol, and others.
- Avoid taking products that contain **ibuprofen** (Motrin, Advil, and others) or **naproxen** (Aleve, All Day Relief, Flanax Pain Relief, and others).
- If you need relief for mild pain, you can take **acetaminophen** (Tylenol). Do **not** take more than 3,000 mg a day.

When should I call for help?

Call one of the numbers below **right away** if you have:

- Trouble breathing
- Fast heartbeat
- Open sores in areas of skin peeling
- Signs of infection such as fever, chills, or cough
- Confusion

Who do I call?

Hours	Call	Phone
Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	SCCA Clinical Nurse Coordinator	206.606.2015
Weeknights from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Weekends and holidays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	SCCA After Hours Triage	206.606.7300
All other times	UWMC Oncology Fellow	206.598.6190 (ask for the Oncology Fellow on call to be paged)

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Seattle Cancer Care Alliance
Renal/Melanoma Clinic:
206.606.2015