

PRECAUTIONS

General Acute serious hypersensitivity reactions (eg, urticaria, angioedema, bronchoconstriction, anaphylaxis) have been observed rarely in INTRON A treated patients. If such an acute reaction develops, the drug should be discontinued immediately and appropriate medical therapy instituted. Transient rashes have occurred in some patients following injection, but have not necessitated treatment interruption.

While fever may be related to the flu-like syndrome reported commonly in patients treated with interferon, other causes of persistent fever should be ruled out.

There have been reports of interferon, including INTRON A Interferon alpha-2b, recombinant for injection, exacerbating preexisting psoriasis; therefore, INTRON A therapy should be used in these patients only if the potential benefit justifies the potential risk.

Variaions in dosage, routes of administration, and adverse reactions exist among different brands of interferon. Therefore, do not use different brands of interferon in any single treatment regimen.

Drug Interactions Interactions between INTRON A Interferon alpha-2b, recombinant for injection and other drugs have not been fully evaluated. Caution should be exercised when administering INTRON A therapy in combination with other potentially myelosuppressive agents such as zidovudine. Concomitant use of alpha interferon and theophylline decreases theophylline clearance, resulting in a 100% increase in serum theophylline levels.

Information for Patients Patients receiving INTRON A treatment should be directed in its appropriate use, informed of benefits and risks associated with treatment, and referred to the **PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET**. This information is intended to aid in the safe and effective use of this medication. It is not a disclosure of all possible adverse or intended effects.

If home use is prescribed, a puncture-resistant container for the disposal of used syringes and needles should be supplied to the patient. Patients should be thoroughly instructed in the importance of proper disposal and cautioned against any reuse of needles and syringes. The full container should be disposed of according to the directions provided by the physician (see **PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET**).

Patients should be cautioned not to change brands of interferon without medical consultation as a change in dosage may result.

Patients receiving high INTRON A doses should be cautioned against performing tasks that would require complete mental alertness, such as operating machinery or driving a motor vehicle.

ADVERSE REACTIONS

General The adverse experiences listed below were reported to be possibly or probably related to INTRON A therapy during clinical trials. Most of these adverse reactions were mild to moderate in severity and were manageable. Some were transient and most diminished with continued therapy.

	MALIGNANT MELANOMA 20 MIU/m ² Induction (IV) 10 MIU/m ² Maintenance (SC)	FOLLICULAR LYMPHOMA 5 MIU TIV/SC	Hairy CELL LEUKEMIA 2 MIU/m ² TIV/SC	CONDYLOMATA ACUMINATA 1 MIU/lesion	AIDS-RELATED KAPOSI'S SARCOMA 30 MIU/m ² TIV/SC	CHRONIC HEPATITIS C ¹ 3 MIU TIV	CHRONIC HEPATITIS B 5 MIU QD 10 MIU TIV	Pediatrics 6 MIU/m ² TIV
	N=143	N=135	N=145	N=352	N=74	N=29	N=183	N=116
ADVERSE EXPERIENCE								
Application-Site Disorders								
injection site inflammation other (55%)	—	—	1	—	—	—	3	—
burning, injection site bleeding, injection site pain, injection site reaction (5% in chronic hepatitis B pediatric), itching	—	—	20	—	—	5	—	—
Blood Disorders (-5%)								
anemia, anemia hypochromic, granulocytopenia, hemolytic anemia, leukopenia, lymphocytosis, neutropenia (9% in chronic hepatitis C, 14% in chronic hepatitis B pediatric), thrombocytopenia (10% in chronic hepatitis C) (bleeding 8% in malignant melanoma), thrombocytopenic purpura	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Body as a Whole								
facial edema	—	1	—	<1	—	3	3	<1
weight decrease other (55%)	3	13	—	—	5	10	10	5
allergic reaction, cachexia, dehydration, earache, hernia, edema, hypercalcemia, hyperglycemia, hypothermia, inflammation nonspecific, lymphadenitis, lymphadenopathy, mastitis, periorbital edema, poor peripheral circulation, peripheral edema (6% in follicular lymphoma), phlebitis superficial, scrotal/penile edema, thirst, weakness, weight increase	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cardiovascular System Disorders (-5%)								
angina, arrhythmia, atrial fibrillation, bradycardia, cardiac failure, cardiomegaly, cardiomyopathy, coronary artery disorder, extrasystoles, heart valve disorder, hematoma, hypertension (9% in chronic hepatitis C), hypotension, palpitations, phlebitis, postural hypotension, pulmonary embolism, Raynaud's disease, tachycardia, thrombosis, varicose vein	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Endocrine System Disorders (-5%)								
aggravation of diabetes mellitus, goiter, gynecomastia, hyperglycemia, hyperthyroidism, hypertriglyceridemia, hypothyroidism, vitiligo	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Flu-like Symptoms								
headache	81	56	68	—	47	55	34	86
chills	62	21	39	—	36	21	43	44
myalgia	54	46	47	—	46	—	—	57
fatigue	75	16	44	—	44	—	—	27
increased sweating	96	29	39	—	28	—	—	40
asthenia	6	13	8	—	84	—	—	69
rigors	6	8	2	—	4	—	—	1
anorexia	63	7	7	—	11	—	—	3
arthralgia	2	7	—	—	—	—	—	5
dizziness	6	8	8	—	9	—	—	15
influenza-like symptoms	23	14	12	—	14	—	—	38
back pain	10	18	9	—	7	—	—	8
dry mouth	1	2	1	—	24	—	—	10
chest pain	2	8	—	—	45	—	—	8
malaise	6	—	14	—	1	—	—	<1
pain (unspecified) other (-5%)	1	2	19	—	22	—	—	5
chest pain substernal, hyperthermia, rhinitis, rhinorrhea	2	8	—	—	5	—	—	6
	15	9	18	3	3	—	—	3
Gastrointestinal System Disorders								
diarrhea	35	19	18	2	18	45	13	19
anorexia	69	21	1	1	38	41	14	53
nausea	66	24	21	—	28	19	19	33
taste alteration	24	2	13	—	7	2	50	18
abdominal pain	2	20	5	—	5	7	2	5
loose stools	—	1	<1	—	21	—	—	4
vomiting	1	32	6	—	11	—	2	2
constipation	1	14	<1	—	6	—	7	10
gingivitis	2 ¹	7	—	—	1	—	4	—
dyspepsia other (-5%)	1	2	2	—	4	—	—	—
abdominal ascites, abdominal distension, colitis, dysphagia, eructation, esophagitis, flatulence, gallstones, gastric ulcer, gastritis, gastroenteritis, gastrointestinal disorder (7% in follicular lymphoma), gastrointestinal hemorrhage, gastrointestinal mucosal discoloration, gingival bleeding, gum hyperplasia, halitosis, hemorrhoids, increased appetite, increased saliva, intestinal disorder, melena, mouth ulceration, mucositis, oral hemorrhage, oral leukoplakia, rectal bleeding after stool, rectal hemorrhage, stomatitis, stomatitis ulcerative, taste loss, tongue disorder, tooth disorder	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
abnormal hepatic function tests, biliary pain, bilirubinemia, hepatitis, increased lactate dehydrogenase, increased transaminases (SGOT/SGPT) (elevated SGOT 63% in malignant melanoma and 24% in follicular lymphoma), jaundice, right upper quadrant pain (15% in chronic hepatitis C), and very rarely, hepatic encephalopathy, hepatic failure, and death	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Musculoskeletal System Disorders								
myoskeletal pain other (-5%)	—	18	—	—	—	—	21	9
arthritis, arthritis, arthritis aggravated, arthrosis, bone disorder, bone pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, hyperreflexia, leg cramps, muscle atrophy, muscle weakness, polyarthritis nodosa, tendonitis, rheumatoid arthritis, spondylitis	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Nervous System and Psychiatric Disorders								
depression	81	9	6	—	9	28	19	6
impaired concentration	13	13	6	—	3	21	5	3
amnesia	—	1	<1	—	3	—	8	<1
confusion	8	2	<5	—	14	—	—	—
hyposthesia	—	1	<5	—	12	—	—	2
irritability	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
sleep disturbance	1	2	<5	—	—	—	13	16
anxiety	1	9	5	—	3	—	35 ¹	12
insomnia	5	4	<1	—	3	—	2	—
nervousness	1	1	<1	—	3	—	12	6
decreased libido other (-5%)	1	1	<5	—	3	—	5	1
abnormal coordination, abnormal dreaming, abnormal gait, abnormal thinking, aggravated depression, aggressive reaction, agitation (7% in chronic hepatitis B pediatric), alcohol intolerance, apathy, aphasia, ataxia, Bell's palsy, CNS dysfunction, coma, convulsions, delirium, dysphonia, emotional lability, extrapyramidal disorder, feeling of ebriety, flushing, hearing disorder, hearing impairment, hot flashes, hyperreflexia, hyperkinesia, hyperkinesia, hypokinesia, impaired consciousness, labyrinthine disorder, loss of consciousness, manic depression, manic reaction, migraine, neuralgia, neuritis, neuropathy, neurosis, paresis, parosmia, personality disorder, polyneuropathy, psychosis, speech disorder, stroke, suicidal ideation, suicide attempt, syncope, tremor, twitching, vertigo (8% in follicular lymphoma)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Reproduction System Disorders (-5%)								
amenorrhea (12% in follicular lymphoma), dysmenorrhea, impotence, leukorrhea, menorrhagia, menstrual irregularity, pelvic pain, penis disorder, sexual dysfunction, uterine bleeding, vaginal dryness	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Resistance Mechanism Disorders								
moniliasis	—	1	—	<1	—	17	—	—
herpes simplex other (-5%)	1	2	—	1	—	3	1	—
abscess, conjunctivitis, fungal infection, hemophilus, herpes zoster, infection, infection bacterial, infection nonspecific (7% in follicular lymphoma), infection parasitic, otitis media, sepsis, sty, trichomonas, upper respiratory tract infection, viral infection (7% in chronic hepatitis C)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Respiratory System Disorders								
dyspnea	15	14	<1	—	1	34	3	5
coughing	6	13	<1	—	1	31	1	4
pharyngitis	2	8	<5	—	1	31	3	5
sinusitis	1	4	—	—	—	21	—	7
nonproductive coughing	1	7	—	—	—	14	—	—
nasal congestion other (55%)	1	7	—	—	—	0	—	—
asthma, bronchitis (10% in follicular lymphoma), bronchospasm, cyanosis, epistaxis (7% in chronic hepatitis B pediatric), hemoptysis, hypoventilation, laryngitis, lung fibrosis, pleural effusion, orthopnea, pleural pain, pneumonia, pneumonitis, pneumothorax, respiratory disorder, respiratory insufficiency, sneezing, tonsillitis, tracheitis, wheezing	—	—	—	—	—	<1	4	—
Skin and Appendages Disorders								
dermatitis	—	—	8	—	—	2	—	1
alopecia	29	23	8	—	12	31	28	38
pruritus	—	10	11	—	7	9	6	4
rash	19	13	25	—	9	10	5	1
dry skin other (-5%)	1	3	9	—	9	—	5	8
abnormal hair texture, acne, cellulitis, cyanosis of the hand, cold and clammy skin, dermatitislichenoides, eczema, epidermal necrolysis, erythema, erythema nodosum, folliculitis, furunculosis, increased hair growth, lacrimal gland disorder, lacrimation, lipoma, maculopapular rash, melanosis, nail disorders, nonherpetic cold sores, pallor, peripheral ischemia, photosensitivity, pruritus genital, psoriasis, psoriasis aggravated, purpura (5% in chronic hepatitis C), rash erythematous, sebaceous cyst, skin depigmentation, skin discoloration, skin nodule, urticaria, vitiligo	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	<1
Urinary System Disorders (-5%)								
albumin/protein in urine, cystitis, dysuria, hematuria, incontinence, increased BUN, micriturion disorder, micriturion frequency, nocturia, polyuria (10% in follicular lymphoma), renal insufficiency, urinary tract infection (5% in chronic hepatitis C)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Vision Disorders (-5%)								
abnormal vision, blurred vision, diplopia, dry eyes, eye pain, nystagmus, photophobia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

¹Dash (—) indicates not reported
²Vomiting was reported with nausea as a single term
³Includes stomatitis/mucositis
⁴Amnesia was reported with confusion as a single term
⁵Percentages based upon a summary of all adverse events during 18 to 24 months of treatment
⁶Predominantly lethargy

Hairy Cell Leukemia The adverse reactions most frequently reported during clinical trials in 145 patients with hairy cell leukemia were the "flu-like" symptoms of fever (68%), fatigue (61%), and chills (46%).

Malignant Melanoma The INTRON A dose was modified because of adverse events in 65% (n=93) of the patients. INTRON A therapy was discontinued because of adverse events in 8% of the patients during induction and 18% of the patients during maintenance. The most frequently reported adverse reactions that were recorded in >20% of INTRON A treated patients were the "flu-like" symptoms of fever (81%), myalgia (75%), anorexia (69%), vomiting/nausea (66%), increased SGOT (63%), headache (62%), chills (54%), depression (46%), diarrhea (35%), alopecia (29%), altered taste sensation (24%), dizziness/vertigo (23%), and anemia (22%).

Adverse reactions classified as severe or life threatening (ECOG Toxicity Criteria grade 3 or 4) were recorded in 66% and 14% of INTRON A treated patients, respectively. Severe adverse reactions recorded in >10% of INTRON A treated patients included neutropenia (leukopenia (26%), fatigue (23%), fever (18%), myalgia (17%), headache (17%), chills (16%), and increased SGOT (14%). Grade 4 fatigue was recorded in 4% and grade 4 depression was recorded in 2% of INTRON A treated patients. No other grade 4 AE was reported in more than 2 INTRON A treated patients. Lethal hepatotoxicity occurred in 2 INTRON A treated patients early in the clinical trial. No subsequent lethal hepatotoxicities were observed with adequate monitoring of liver function tests (see **PRECAUTIONS - Laboratory Tests**).

Follicular Lymphoma Ninety-six percent of patients treated with CHVP plus INTRON A therapy and 91% of patients treated with CHVP alone reported an adverse event of any severity. Asthenia, fever, neutropenia, increased hepatic enzymes, alopecia, headache, anorexia, "flu-like" symptoms, myalgia, dyspnea, thrombocytopenia, parosmia, and polyuria occurred more frequently in the CHVP plus INTRON A treated patients than in patients treated with CHVP alone. Adverse reactions classified as severe or life threatening (World Health Organization grade 3 or 4) recorded in >5% of CHVP plus INTRON A treated patients included neutropenia (34%), asthenia (10%), and fatigue (10%). The incidence of neutropenic infection was 6% in CHVP plus INTRON A vs 2% in CHVP alone. One patient in each treatment group required hospitalization.

Twenty-eight percent of CHVP plus INTRON A treated patients had a temporary modification/interruption of their INTRON A therapy, but only 13 patients (10%) permanently stopped INTRON A therapy because of toxicity. There were four deaths on study; two patients committed suicide in the CHVP plus INTRON A arm and two patients in the CHVP arm had witnessed sudden death. Three patients with hepatitis B (one of whom also had alcoholic cirrhosis) developed hepatotoxicity leading to discontinuation of INTRON A. Other reasons for discontinuation included intolerable asthenia (5/135), severe flu symptoms (2/135), and one patient each with exacerbation of ankylosing spondylitis, psychosis, and decreased ejection fraction.

Condyolomata Acuminata Eighty-eight percent (511/522) of patients treated with INTRON A Interferon alpha-2b, recombinant for injection for condyolomata acuminata who were evaluable for safety, reported an adverse reaction during treatment. The incidence of the adverse reactions reported increased when the number of treated lesions increased from one to five. All 40 patients who had five warts treated, reported some type of adverse reaction during treatment.

Adverse reactions and abnormal laboratory test values reported by patients who were retreated were qualitatively and quantitatively similar to those reported during the initial INTRON A treatment period.

AIDS-Related Kaposi's Sarcoma In patients with AIDS-Related Kaposi's Sarcoma, some type of adverse reaction occurred in 100% of the 74 patients treated with 30 million IU/m² TIV three times a week and in 97% of the 29 patients treated with 35 million IU per day.

Of these adverse reactions, those classified as severe (World Health Organization grade 3 or 4) were reported in 27% to 55% of patients. Severe adverse reactions in the 30 million IU/m² TIV study included: fatigue (20%), influenza-like symptoms (15%), anorexia (12%), dry mouth (4%), headache (4%), confusion (3%), fever (3%), myalgia (3%), and nausea and vomiting (1% each). Severe adverse reactions for patients who received the 35 million IU QD included: fever (24%), fatigue (17%), influenza-like symptoms (14%), confusion (14%), headache (10%), pharyngitis (7%), and alopecia, dyspnea, dysphagia, GI hemorrhage, abnormal hepatic function, increased SGOT, myalgia, cardiomyopathy, face edema, depression, emotional lability, suicide attempt, chest pain, and coughing (1 patient each). Overall, the incidence of severe toxicity was higher among patients who received the 35 million IU per day dose.

Chronic Hepatitis C Two studies of extended treatment (18 to 24 months) with INTRON A Interferon alpha-2b, recombinant for injection show that approximately 95% of all patients treated experience some type of adverse event and that patients treated for extended duration continue to experience adverse events throughout treatment. Most adverse events reported are mild to moderate in severity. However, 29/152 (19%) of patients treated for 18 to 24 months experienced a serious adverse event compared to 11/163 (7%) of those treated for 6 months. Adverse events which occur or persist during extended treatment are similar in type and severity to those occurring during short-course therapy.

Of the patients achieving a complete response after 6 months of therapy, 12/79 (15%) subsequently discontinued INTRON A treatment during extended therapy because of adverse events, and 23/79 (29%) experienced severe adverse events (WHO grade 3 or 4) during extended therapy.

In patients using REBETRON Combination Therapy containing INTRON A and REBETOL (ribavirin, USP) Capsules, the primary toxicity observed was hemolytic anemia. Reductions in hemoglobin levels occurred within the first 1 to 2 weeks of therapy. Cardiac and pulmonary events associated with anemia occurred in approximately 10% of patients treated with INTRON A/REBETOL therapy. See REBETRON Combination Therapy package insert for additional information.

Chronic Hepatitis B Adults In patients with chronic hepatitis B, some type of adverse reaction occurred in 98% of the 101 patients treated at 5 million IU QD and 90% of the 70 patients treated at 10 million IU TIV. Most of these adverse reactions were mild to moderate in severity, were manageable, and were reversible following the end of therapy.

Adverse reactions classified as severe (causing a significant interference with normal daily activities or clinical state) were reported in 21% to 44% of patients. The severe adverse reactions reported most frequently were the "flu-like" symptoms of fever (28%), fatigue (15%), headache (5%), myalgia (4%), rigors (4%), and other severe "flu-like" symptoms which occurred in 1% to 3% of patients. Other severe adverse reactions occurring in more than one patient were alopecia (8%), anorexia (6%), depression (3%), nausea (3%), and vomiting (2%).

To manage side effects, the dose was reduced, or INTRON A therapy was interrupted in 25% to 38% of patients. Five percent of patients discontinued treatment due to adverse experiences. **Pediatrics** In pediatric patients, the most frequently reported adverse events were those commonly associated with interferon treatment: flu-like symptoms (100%), gastrointestinal system disorders (46%), and nausea and vomiting (40%). Neutropenia (13%) and thrombocytopenia (3%) were also reported. None of the adverse events were life threatening. The majority were moderate to severe and resolved upon dose reduction or drug discontinuation.

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