L-asparaginase/Asparaginase/Pegasparagase
in the Treatment of Cancer

L-asparaginase/Asparaginase/Pegasparagase (Elspar®/Erwinase®/Oncaspar®) is a medication used to treat leukemia. This medication works by interfering with the cancer cell’s ability to reproduce.

L-asparaginase/Asparaginase/Pegasparagase is given as an injection into the muscle (IM).

Your child’s doctor will give you a copy of the treatment protocol which will include information on the medication dose and when it will be given.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS (unless otherwise instructed):

- You may apply a topical anesthetic or "numbing cream" (LMX®, EMLA®) to the injection site 1 hour before your child receives the medication. Your nurse will instruct you on where to apply the "numbing cream."

- Your child will have his urine tested for glucose before each does of medication. If your child wears diapers, place a cotton ball in the diaper 1 to 2 hours before your child is due to receive the medication.

- Bring your child’s Epi-Pen® with you each time your child is due to receive this medication. It would be used if an allergic reaction occurs. You should keep the Epi-Pen® with you or your child as long as 2 weeks after your child receives pegasparagase.

- Your child will need to stay in the Hematology/Oncology Clinic or on the Hematology/Oncology unit for observation for 1 hour after the medication is given.

SIDE EFFECTS:

The following side effects are common:

- Pain or redness at the injection site
- Low platelet count – increasing your child’s risk for bleeding
- Allergic reaction – rash, hives, itching, and/or difficulty breathing

The following side effects are less common, but can occur:

- Severe allergic reaction – shortness of breath, facial swelling
- High blood sugar (especially if your child is also receiving steroids)
- Abdominal pain
- Inflammation of the pancreas
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Blood clots (usually associated with a central line) or oozing from the central line
- Stroke
Call your child’s hematology doctor or nurse if your child has:

- Any signs of an allergic reaction (rash, hives, itching, shortness of breath, facial swelling)
- Severe pain at the injection site
- Large area of redness or swelling at the injection site
- Extreme thirst
- Sleepiness
- Frequent urination
- Severe abdominal or back pain
- Fever of 101.5°F (38.6°C) or greater
- Swollen or painful neck or arm
- Sudden weakness
- Seizures

Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.:
Call your child’s Hematology/Oncology Advanced Practice Nurse at (816) 234-3265.

Monday through Friday after 5 p.m., and on weekends or holidays:
Call (816) 234-3000 and ask the operator to page the Hematology/Oncology nurse or doctor "on-call."

Call 911 if your child has:

- Severe shortness of breath
- Severe allergic reaction
- Sudden weakness or confusion