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Care During Chemotherapy and Beyond

Degarelix

(deg-a-REL-ix)

Trade Name(s): Firmagon®

Degarelix is the generic name for the trade name drug Firmagon®. In some cases, health care professionals may use the trade name Firmagon® when referring to the generic drug name degarelix.

Drug Type: Degarelix is an anti-cancer ("antineoplastic") chemotherapy drug. This medication is classified as a "gonadotropin-releasing hormone antagonist." (For more detail, see "How Degarelix Works" below).

What Degarelix Is Used For

- Degarelix is used to treat patients with advanced prostate cancer

Note: If a drug has been approved for one use, physicians may elect to use this same drug for other problems if they believe it may be helpful.

How Degarelix Is Given

- Degarelix is injected under the skin at the abdominal region only
- Rotate injection sites
- A loading dose of 240 mg is administered via two 120 mg (3 mL) injections in different sites
- The maintenance dose is 80 mg and it is administered as one (4 mL) injection every 28 days
- Begin maintenance dose 28 days after initial loading dose

The amount of degarelix that you will receive is a fixed dose and does not require dose adjustment.

Side Effects

Important things to remember about the side effects of degarelix:

- Most people will not experience all of the degarelix side effects are listed here.
- Degarelix side effects are often predictable in terms of their onset, duration, and severity.
- Degarelix side effects will improve after therapy is complete.
- Degarelix side effects may be quite manageable. There are many options to minimize or prevent the side effects of degarelix.

The following side effects are common (occurring in greater than 30%) for patients taking degarelix:

- Increased liver enzymes
- Injection site reaction, such as swelling, redness and pain

These are less common side effects (occurring in 10-29%) for patients receiving degarelix:

- Hot flashes
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Weight gain
- Weight loss

These are rare but serious side effects of degarelix:

A rare, but serious side effect of degarelix is QT prolongation. You should seek emergency help and notify your health care provider immediately if you develop abnormal heart beats, feel faint, or have shortness of breath.

Not all side effects are listed above. Side effects that are very rare -- occurring in less than 10 percent of patients -- are not listed here. However, you should always inform your health care provider if you experience any unusual symptoms.

When to Contact Your Doctor or Health Care Provider

Contact your health care provider immediately, day or night, if you should experience any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher, chills (possible signs of infection)

The following symptoms require medical attention, but are not an emergency. Contact your health care provider within 24 hours of noticing any of the following:

- Nausea (interferes with ability to eat and unrelieved with prescribed medication)
- Vomiting (vomiting more than 4-5 times in a 24-hour period)
- Diarrhea (4-6 episodes in a 24-hour period)
- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Black or tarry stools, or blood in your stools
- Blood in the urine
- Pain or burning with urination
- Extreme fatigue (unable to carry on self-care activities)
- Mouth sores (painful redness, swelling or ulcers)

Always inform your health care provider if you experience any unusual symptoms.

Precautions

- Before starting degarelix treatment, make sure you tell your doctor about *any* other medications you are taking (including prescription, over-the-counter, vitamins, herbal

remedies, etc.).

- Do not receive any kind of immunization or vaccination without your doctor's approval while taking degarelix.

Self-Care Tips

- Drink at least two to three quarts of fluid every 24 hours, unless you are instructed otherwise.
- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid contact sports or activities that could cause injury.
- To reduce nausea, take anti-nausea medications as prescribed by your doctor, and eat small, frequent meals.
- Follow regimen of anti-diarrhea medications as prescribed by your health care professional.
- Eat foods that may help reduce diarrhea (see managing side effect - diarrhea).
- In general, drinking alcoholic beverages should be kept to a minimum or avoided completely. You should discuss this with your doctor.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Maintain good nutrition.
- Remain active as you are able. Gentle exercise is encouraged such as a daily walk.
- If you experience symptoms or side effects, be sure to discuss them with your health care team. They can prescribe medications and/or offer other suggestions that are effective in managing such problems.
- If you are experiencing hot flashes, wear light clothing, stay in a cool environment, and put cool cloths on your head to reduce symptoms.
- Acetaminophen or ibuprofen may help relieve discomfort from fever, headache and/or generalized aches and pains. However, be sure to talk with your doctor before taking it.

Monitoring and Testing While Taking Degarelix

You will be checked regularly by your doctor while you are taking degarelix to monitor side effects and check your response to therapy. Periodic blood work will be obtained to monitor your complete blood count (CBC) as well as the function of other organs (such as your kidneys and liver) will also be ordered by your doctor.

The therapeutic effect of degarelix should be monitored by measuring blood concentrations of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) periodically. If PSA increases, blood concentrations of testosterone should be measured.

Your doctor might also monitor your bone mineral density, as well as serum electrolytes (calcium, magnesium, potassium, sodium) and ECG (electrocardiography) at baseline and periodically. Screening for diabetes and cardiovascular risk (blood pressure, lipid profile, serum glucose) will be done prior to initiating treatment and 3 to 6 months after initiation.

How Degarelix Works

Gonadotropin is a group of hormones secreted in your brain and it regulates normal growth, sexual development and reproductive function. The hormone acts on the male sex gland which produces sperm and testosterone. Gonadotropins are released when gonadotropin-releasing hormones, or

GnRH, bind to their receptors. This releases gonadotropins which promotes the growth and maturation of sex organs and testosterone production, stimulating the growth of the prostate.

Degarelix is a GnRH antagonist. In general, an antagonist drug blocks the receptor by binding to it and counteracts its function.

Degarelix inhibits GnRH from binding to its receptors and stops the release of gonadotropin. By blocking the GnRH receptors, degarelix inhibits the sex hormones' activity and decreases the production of testosterone. Since testosterone stimulates the growth of prostate cancer, the reduction of testosterone improves the prognosis of prostate cancer and decreases its size.

Note: We strongly encourage you to talk with your health care professional about your specific medical condition and treatments. The information contained in this website is meant to be helpful and educational, but is not a substitute for medical advice.

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