Acromegaly and Somavert® (pegvisomant) Injection

What is acromegaly?1

Acromegaly is a condition that results from too much growth hormone in the body. Growth hormone is a hormone that regulates the physical growth of the body. The excess growth hormone usually comes from noncancerous tumors on the pituitary gland.

When this problem occurs in childhood, the disease is called gigantism.

People with acromegaly are at an increased risk for:
- Colon polyps which may lead to colon cancer.
- Type 2 diabetes.
- High blood pressure.
- Heart disease.
- Arthritis.

What are some symptoms of acromegaly?1

The most common symptom of acromegaly is the abnormal growth of the hands and feet. Patients will notice swelling in their hands and feet, which can lead to changes in ring or shoe size. Later, facial features will change. The brow and lower jaw may stick out further than normal and the nose bone may grow. Other facial bone growth can cause spaces between teeth.

Other symptoms of acromegaly include:
- Arthritis
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Joint aches
- Thick, coarse, oily skin
- Skin tags
- Deepening of the voice
- Breathing problems while sleeping
- Excessive sweating and skin odor
- Fatigue and weakness
- Headaches
- Vision problems
**How can I stay healthy?**

There are many steps that you can take to stay healthy.

- Don’t ignore your medical condition.
- Educate yourself about acromegaly.
- Learn as much as you can about your treatment plan.
- Talk to your doctor about any questions or concerns.

Other things that you can do to stay healthy:

- Keep regular appointments with your doctor.
- Keep a diary. Write down any changes in symptoms such as changes in ring or shoe size and facial appearance.
- Get regular blood tests.
- Eat healthy and exercise regularly.
- Get your eyes checked regularly.
- Get regular blood glucose levels and blood pressure readings.
- Schedule a colonoscopy to screen for colon cancer.

**What treatments are available for acromegaly?**

For acromegaly, treatment options include surgery, medication therapy, and radiation therapy.

**Surgery**

Surgery relieves the pressure on the brain regions and leads to a rapid decrease of growth hormone levels. If the surgery is successful, facial features will improve within a few days.

**Medication therapy**

Medication therapy such as Parlodel® (bromocriptine), Somatuline® (lanreotide), Sandostatin® (octreotide), and Somavert® (pegvisomant) may be used. Medication can be used when surgery does not result in a cure. Also, it can sometimes be used to make tumors smaller before surgery.

**Radiation**

Radiation is usually for people who have some tumor remaining after surgery and for those people who do not respond to medication.
What is Somavert?²

- Somavert is a medication that blocks the activity of growth hormone in the body.
- It decreases the action of growth hormone in people with acromegaly.

What are some side effects of Somavert? What can I do to ease the side effects?²

Table 1 lists some side effects and some tips on how to manage them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Side Effects</th>
<th>Self-Care Tips</th>
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</table>
| Liver problems (eg, yellowing of the eyes and skin, dark urine, pale stool color, loss of appetite) | - Your doctor should check your liver to make sure it is healthy before and during treatment.  
- Make sure you get your blood tested as recommended by your doctor.  
- If your doctor notices a change in your blood work, your doctor may adjust the dose.  
- If you notice any yellowing of eyes and skin, dark urine, pale stool color, and/or loss of appetite, stop the medication right away and call your doctor. |
| Flu symptoms (eg, chills, fever, muscle aches)    | - Drink plenty of fluids. Avoid alcohol and caffeine.  
- Try using cooling packs for fever and muscle aches.  
- Inject in the early evening. This may help you to sleep through the symptoms.  
- Talk to your doctor about using an over-the-counter medication (such as Advil®, Motrin®, or Tylenol®) to reduce fevers. |
| Infection (eg, cold symptoms, upper respiratory infection) | - Ice the area before and after injecting the drug.  
- After cleaning the site with alcohol, make sure your skin is dry before injecting the medication.  
- Rotate the injection site. Possible injection sites include upper arm, upper thigh, abdomen (stomach area) and buttocks. |
| Injection-site reactions (eg, swelling, bruising, redness, rash) | - Drink clear liquids.  
- Eat light, bland foods (such as saltine crackers or plain bread).  
- Avoid fried, greasy, or sweet foods.  
- Drink and eat slowly.  
- Eat smaller meals more frequently.  
- Avoid activity after eating.  
- Avoid brushing your teeth after eating. |
### Side Effects

- **Diarrhea**

### Self-Care Tips

- Eat soft foods that contain large amounts of liquid such as:
  - Sherbet.
  - Yogurt.
  - Pudding.
- Eat foods with plenty of fiber such as:
  - Fruits.
  - Vegetables.
  - Whole grain breads and cereals.
- Do not take over-the-counter medications for diarrhea without first talking to your doctor.

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### How should I store Somavert?[^2]

- Store in the refrigerator. Once the medication is prepared, it can be stored at room temperature, but must be used within six hours.
- Do not freeze Somavert.

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### What other resources are available?

For more information, please contact the following resources:

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<tr>
<th>OptumRx</th>
<th>Pfizer Bridge Program™ for Somavert</th>
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<tr>
<td>Phone: 1-888-702-8423</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.optumrx.com">www.optumrx.com</a></td>
<td>Phone: 1-800-645-1280</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.somavert.com/bridge/bridge.aspx">www.somavert.com/bridge/bridge.aspx</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pituitary Network Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone: 1-805-499-9973</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.pituitary.org">www.pituitary.org</a>,</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.acromegaly.org">www.acromegaly.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Hormone Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone: 1-800-HORMONE (1-800-467-6663)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:hormone@endo-society.org">hormone@endo-society.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Website: <a href="http://www.hormone.org">www.hormone.org</a></td>
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<td>The Pituitary Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone: 1-212-263-6772</td>
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<td>Website: <a href="http://www.pituitarysociety.org">www.pituitarysociety.org</a></td>
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References:


The information in this educational handout doesn’t substitute the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment provided by your doctor. Always seek the help of your doctor or a qualified health provider for any questions about your medical condition.