

Side effects

Interferon and ribavirin are very strong drugs and both have potential side effects. Not everyone experiences these side effects, but it is rare for someone to have none at all. You should expect to get at least a few, particularly at the beginning. The list below sets them out and rates them as common, less common, and rare.

The list is practically the same for interferon (pegylated or standard) with or without ribavirin, since it is interferon that is the main cause. The exception to this is anaemia, which is a side effect of ribavirin. Because anaemia lowers the amount of oxygen carried around the body, particularly to the muscles, it tends to increase the fatigue that interferon causes.

Side effects that may require dose reduction or an end to treatment:

Anaemia (lowered levels of haemoglobin)	common
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Neutropenia (lowered levels of neutrophils, which are part of the immune system)	common
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Thrombocytopenia (lowered levels of platelets, which help blood to clot)	common
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Diabetes	Less common
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Other side effects

Flu-like symptoms, including

Fatigue	common
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Headaches	common
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Fever (in the 48 hours following an interferon injection)	common
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Shaking	less common
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Muscular and joint aches	common
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Dizziness	less common
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Sight problems, including

Retinal problems rare

Blurred vision less common

Thyroid disease rare

Digestion/stomach symptoms, including

Nausea common

Decreased appetite common

Diarrhoea rare

Vomiting rare

Mental symptoms, including

Depression common

Insomnia common

Irritability/intolerance common

Concentration difficulties common

Respiratory symptoms, including

Coughing less common

Difficulty breathing rare

Skin problems, including

Hair loss common

Pruritis (itching) common

Rash

less common

Dry skin

less common

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