

# PEGATRON COMBINATION THERAPY

A combination therapy containing PEG-Intron<sup>®</sup> (Peginterferon alfa-2b) and REBETOL<sup>®</sup> (Ribavirin)

## Consumer Medicine Information

### What is in this leaflet?

This leaflet answers some common questions about PEGATRON Combination Therapy. It does not contain all of the available information.

It does not take the place of talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

All medicines have risks and benefits. Your doctor has weighed the risks of you using PEGATRON Combination Therapy against the benefits they expect it will have for you.

**If you have any concerns about using this medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.**

**Keep this leaflet with the medicine.** You may want to read it again.

### What PEGATRON Combination Therapy is used for?

PEGATRON Combination Therapy is used for the treatment of chronic hepatitis C (a viral infection of the liver) in patients (18 years or older) who have compensated liver disease and who either have not previously received, or have failed, interferon alfa treatment. This includes patients who are co-infected with stable Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

PEGATRON Combination Therapy consists of two products, an injection called PEG-Intron and capsules called REBETOL.

The active ingredient in PEG-Intron is peginterferon alfa-2b. Peginterferon alfa-2b belongs to a group of medicines called interferons.

Interferons are a family of naturally occurring small protein molecules. They modify the response of the body's immune system to help fight infections and severe diseases.

REBETOL capsules contain an antiviral agent called ribavirin.

REBETOL capsules are not effective when used alone to treat chronic hepatitis C and must only be used in combination with PEG-Intron injections.

The combination of REBETOL capsules and PEG-Intron injections make the treatment of hepatitis C more effective.

### Before you use PEGATRON Combination Therapy

*When you must not use it:*

**Do not use PEGATRON Combination Therapy if you are allergic to:**

- peginterferon alfa-2b
- any alpha interferon
- ribavirin
- any of the ingredients listed at the end of this leaflet (for PEG-Intron and REBETOL).

**Some of the symptoms of an allergic reaction may include:**

- hives, itching or skin rash
- swelling of the face, lips or tongue which may lead to difficulty in swallowing
- shortness of breath, wheezing, difficulty in breathing or a tight feeling in your chest.

**You must mention any past or present serious illness to your doctor.** PEGATRON Combination Therapy is not suitable for patients with certain other past or present serious illness.

**Do not use PEGATRON Combination Therapy if you are or your partner is pregnant or planning to become pregnant. This applies to both female patients and to partners of male patients using PEGATRON Combination Therapy.**

It is very important that you or your partner avoid becoming pregnant during treatment and for 6 months after treatment. This is because REBETOL capsules can affect the sperm as well as the unborn child.

**Do not use PEGATRON Combination Therapy if you are breastfeeding.**

**Do not use PEGATRON Combination Therapy if you have any of these medical conditions:**

- serious heart problems during the last six months or any previous serious heart condition
- blood disorders including anaemia (low number of red blood cells), thalassaemia (Mediterranean anaemia), sickle-cell anaemia
- serious kidney problems
- serious liver problems other than chronic hepatitis C
- autoimmune hepatitis or any other problem with your immune system
- thyroid disease that is not well controlled with medicines.

**Do not use PEGATRON Combination Therapy if you have or have had severe nervous or mental problems, such as severe depression or thoughts of suicide.**

**Do not use PEGATRON Combination Therapy if you are presently taking or have been treated recently with medications that suppress the immune system.** This includes body organ transplant recipients.

**Do not use PEGATRON Combination Therapy if you have any of the following hereditary disorders:**

- Galactose intolerance (the body is unable to absorb galactose)
- Lapp lactase deficiency (the body is unable to digest milk and milk products)
- Glucose-galactose malabsorption (the small intestine's is unable to transport and absorb glucose and galactose).

**Do not use PEGATRON Combination Therapy after the expiry date (EXP) printed on the packs has passed.**

If you use it after the expiry date has passed, it may not work as well.

**Do not use PEGATRON Combination Therapy if the packaging is torn or shows signs of tampering.**

**If you are not sure whether you should start using PEGATRON Combination Therapy, talk to your doctor.**

*Before you start to use it*

**If you are or your partner is a woman of childbearing age, you or your partner must have a negative pregnancy test before treatment with PEGATRON Combination Therapy starts. You or your partner must also have a negative pregnancy test each month during treatment and for the 6 months after treatment is stopped. Two effective forms of contraception must be used one by each partner, male and female, during treatment with PEGATRON Combination Therapy and for the 6 months after treatment is completed.**

REBETOL can cause harm to the unborn child if a pregnant woman takes REBETOL herself during pregnancy or has unprotected sex (sex without using a condom) with a man who is taking REBETOL. REBETOL can damage the sperm and the embryo (unborn child).

**Do not use PEGATRON Combination Therapy if you are breastfeeding.**

**Your doctor may request liver and kidney function tests before starting your treatment, especially if you are older than 65 years or if you have problems with your liver and/or kidneys.**

**Your doctor may also request tests of your heart function before starting treatment, especially if you have problems with your heart.**

**Your doctor may ask you to have an eye examination before starting treatment.**

**You must tell your doctor if you have allergies to:**

- any other medicines
- any other substance, such as food, dyes or preservatives.

**You must tell your doctor if you have or have had any medical conditions, especially the following:**

- congestive heart failure, irregular or very fast heartbeat, heart disease, or you have ever had a heart attack or other heart problems
- hypertriglyceridaemia (or high triglycerides levels in the blood)
- a history of diabetes or lung disease
- blood clotting disorder
- psoriasis
- sarcoidosis
- kidney problems
- liver problems (besides hepatitis C)
- thyroid disease
- eye problems
- gout
- organ transplant
- HIV positive
- depression or any other mental disorders.

**You must tell your doctor if you have or have had serious nervous or mental problems, such as severe depression, thoughts of suicide or any other psychiatric disorder.**

**Tell your doctor if you are taking any other medicines, including medicines that you buy without a prescription from a pharmacy, supermarket or health food shop.**

**Tell your doctor if you are taking antiviral medications for HIV infection (e.g. didanosine, abacavir) as co administration with REBETOL capsules is not recommended and will need to be monitored.**

**Tell your doctor if you are taking theophylline for asthma, as you may need to take different amounts of your medicine.**

**Tell your doctor if you are taking shosaikoto, a Chinese herbal medicine. Lung problems such as shortness of breath and pneumonia have been reported more frequently if shosaikoto is taken with a form of interferon.**

*Use in Children*

PEGATRON Combination Therapy is not recommended for use in patients under 18 years of age.

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## How to use PEGATRON Combination Therapy

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**Follow all directions given to you by your doctor carefully.**

They may differ from the information contained in this leaflet.

Routine blood tests will help your doctor to monitor your response to treatment.

**Do not exceed the recommended dosage.**

### **REBETOL CAPSULES**

*How much to take*

Your doctor has determined the dose of REBETOL capsules based on your weight. For patients weighing:

- less than 65 kg: the usual dose is 2 capsules in the morning and 2 capsules in the evening.

- 65 kg to 85 kg: the usual dose is 2 capsules in the morning and 3 capsules in the evening.
- 86 kg to 105 kg: the usual dose is 3 capsules in the morning and 3 capsules in the evening.
- > 105 kg: the usual dose is 3 capsules in the morning and 4 capsules in the evening.

Your doctor may adjust your dose during therapy according to your response.

In some cases, your doctor may reduce the REBETOL dosage to one capsule in the morning and 2 capsules in the evening.

### *How to take the capsules*

REBETOL capsules should be taken with food.

Swallow the capsules whole with water.

## **PEG-INTRON INJECTIONS**

### *How much PEG-Intron to inject*

Your doctor has determined your dose of PEG-Intron based on your weight and according to your needs. The usual dose of PEG-Intron is 1.5 µg/kg once a week.

### *How to prepare and administer the injection*

PEG-Intron Powder for Injection is available as a Redipen injection device

The Redipen injection device is a plastic injection pen containing the PEG-Intron powder and the solvent (Water for Injections) in separate compartments of a two-chamber cartridge.

The PEG-Intron powder for injection is dissolved in the sterile Water for Injection before it can be used.

The prepared/reconstituted solution should be clear, colourless and free of particles.

PEG-Intron is for subcutaneous use. This means that it is injected into fatty tissue just under the skin.

If you are injecting this medicine yourself, your doctor or nurse will teach you how to prepare and give the injection under the skin.

There is a patient instruction sheet inside the box that describes how to prepare the injection and self- inject.

**Do not attempt to inject yourself until you understand the procedure and requirement of self-injection.**

### *When to inject*

**Prepare the dose just before you intend to inject and use it immediately.**

**Inject PEG-Intron once each week on the same day.**

**If you are injecting this medicine yourself, inject it at bedtime.**

Interferons may cause unusual tiredness (flu-like symptoms) and is best used before going to bed.

**When self injecting, ensure that the injection site is varied each time the injection is administered.**

### *How long to use PEGATRON Combination Therapy*

Treatment should be for at least 12 weeks and for up to 1 year depending on your response.

For HCV/HIV co-infected patients, the recommended duration of treatment is 48 weeks.

**Do not stop using this medicine without first checking with your doctor.**

Your doctor will determine when your treatment should be stopped.

**If you become pregnant while using PEGATRON Combination Therapy, you should immediately stop the treatment and tell your doctor. If your partner becomes pregnant while you are using PEGATRON Combination Therapy, ask your partner to tell her doctor immediately.**

### *If you forget to use PEGATRON Combination Therapy*

**If you miss a dose of REBETOL capsules take the missed dose as soon as possible during the same day. If an entire day has gone by, check with your doctor. Do not double the next dose to make up for the dose that you missed.**

**If you missed a dose of PEG-Intron injection, take the missed dose as soon as possible during the same day or on the next day, and continue your treatment as usual. If several days have gone by, check with your doctor. Do not double the next dose to make up for the dose that you missed.**

**If you are not sure what to do, ask your doctor.**

**If you have trouble remembering when to take your medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist for some hints.**

### *If you use too much (overdose)*

**Immediately telephone your doctor or the Poisons Information Centre (in Australia call 13 11 26; in New Zealand call 0800 764 766) for advice, or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital, if you think that you or anyone else may have taken too much PEGATRON Combination Therapy. Do this even if there are no signs of discomfort or poisoning. You may need urgent medical attention.**

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## **While you are using PEGATRON Combination Therapy**

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### *Things you must do*

**Use PEGATRON Combination Therapy exactly as your doctor has prescribed.**

**Tell your doctor immediately if you have an allergic reaction.**

Symptoms of an allergic reaction may include:

- hives, itching or skin rash
- swelling of the face, lips or tongue, which may lead to difficulty in swallowing
- shortness of breath, wheezing, difficulty in breathing or a tight feeling in your chest.

**Tell all doctors, dentists and pharmacists who are treating you that you are using PEGATRON Combination Therapy.**

**If you become pregnant while using PEGATRON Combination Therapy, you should immediately stop the treatment and tell your doctor.**

**If your partner becomes pregnant while you are using PEGATRON Combination Therapy, ask your partner to tell her doctor immediately.**

**Tell your doctor immediately if you become depressed or have suicidal feelings while you are using PEGATRON Combination Therapy.**

**Keep all your doctor's appointments so that your progress can be checked. Your doctor will carry out blood tests to monitor your response to treatment.**

**Your doctor may ask you to have regular eye checks during treatment, especially if you are diabetic or have high blood pressure.**

**Your doctor may want you to drink extra fluids.**

This will help prevent low blood pressure while you are on PEGATRON Combination Therapy.

**Make sure you brush your teeth twice daily and have regular dental checks while you are using PEGATRON combination therapy. If you experience vomiting, rinse your mouth thoroughly afterwards.**

**If you are about to be started on any new medicine, tell your doctor and pharmacist that you are using PEGATRON Combination Therapy.**

**If you plan to have surgery that needs a general anaesthetic, tell your doctor or dentist that you are using this medicine.**

*Things you must not do*

**If you become drowsy from this therapy, do not drive or use machinery.**

PEGATRON Combination Therapy may cause dizziness and drowsiness in some people.

**Do not use PEGATRON Combination Therapy to treat any other complaints.**

**Do not give this therapy to anyone else, even if their symptoms seem similar to yours.**

**Do not switch to any other brands of interferon as your response to other interferons may be different.**

**Do not let yourself run out of medicine over weekends or holiday periods.**

*Things to be careful of*

PEGATRON Combination Therapy can cause a temporary lowering of the number of cells/ platelets in your blood.

*Check with your doctor immediately*

**Tell your doctor immediately if:**

- you notice any signs of anaemia, such as tiredness, being short of breath, and looking pale.
- you think you are getting a cold or chest infection. While using PEGATRON Combination Therapy, you may temporarily have a greater risk of getting an infection.

- you notice unusual bleeding or bruising. Your blood may temporarily take a longer time to clot.

**Tell your doctor if you notice:**

- any changes in your eyes or eyesight even if there is no pain or discomfort
- signs of psoriasis for the first time or worsening of the disease
- that you are looking unusually pale.

**Your doctor may want you to drink extra fluids.**

This will help prevent low blood pressure while you are on PEGATRON Combination Therapy.

**If you are also taking antiviral medications for HIV infection, and suddenly develop unexplained/ abnormal sensation of shortness of breath, consult your doctor immediately. Stop using medications until you have checked with your doctor.**

The shortness of breath sensation may be due to a condition known as "lactic acidosis" (high acid levels in the blood). This condition has been reported with some HIV (antiviral) medications.

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## Side effects

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**Tell your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible if you do not feel well while you are using PEGATRON Combination Therapy.**

All medicines have side effects. Sometimes they are serious, most of the time they are not. You may need medical treatment if you get some of the side effects.

**Ask your doctor or pharmacist any questions you may have.**

**Stop using PEGATRON Combination Therapy, tell your doctor immediately or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital, if you suddenly get an itchy rash, swelling of the face, lips or tongue, start wheezing or have trouble breathing or feel faint.**

These could be signs of a serious allergic reaction.

**Check with your doctor immediately if any of the following side effects occurs:**

- signs of anaemia such as tiredness, being short of breath and looking pale
- signs of liver decomposition such as a swollen abdomen, swelling of the legs, bruising, vomiting blood and difficulty in staying awake or alert
- lower back or side pain, painful difficult or frequent urination
- severe stomach pain
- severe nosebleed
- unusual bruising or bleeding (signs of bleeding include blood in stool or urine, or black or tar-like stools)
- fever or chills beginning after a few weeks of treatment
- persistent cough or shortness of breath
- problems with eyesight or hearing
- seizures
- depression, aggressive behaviour or suicidal feelings
- confusion, trouble sleeping, thinking or concentrating
- chest pain, or fast or irregular heartbeat
- numbness or tingling sensation.

The above list includes serious side effects. You may need urgent medical attention.

**Tell your doctor if you notice any of the following and they worry you:**

- injection site irritation, inflammation or pain
- flu-like symptoms such as headache, fatigue, fever and chills
- weakness, sleepiness
- flushing, increased sweating feeling faint or dizziness
- shaky hands

- increased or decreased sensitivity to touch
- dry or teary eyes
- sore mouth or tongue, dry mouth or taste change
- bleeding gums
- thirst
- weight loss, loss of appetite
- stomach pain, indigestion or constipation
- nausea (feeling sick), vomiting or diarrhoea/intestinal gas
- muscular ache and pain or joint pain
- pain on right side around your ribs
- gout
- tense muscles
- migraine
- nervousness, mood swings, anxiety, agitation irritability
- hair loss/change in hair texture, itching, rash or dry or redness of the skin
- skin sensitive to sunlight
- jaundice ( yellow skin)
- problems with your thyroid function which may appear as facial puffiness, swelling around the eyes, intolerance to cold or weight loss, increased appetite and difficulty sleeping
- eye or ear pain/infection
- lack of interest in sex/inability to perform
- sore throat, cough, runny or stuffy nose
- viral or fungal infection
- menstrual problems or period pain
- mouth thrush
- back pain, limb pain.

These side effects may go away as your body adjusts to the medication. If they continue or are severe, tell your doctor.

**Other side effects not listed above may also occur in some patients. Tell your doctor if you notice anything that is making you feel unwell.**

**Check with your doctor as soon as possible if you have any problems while using PEGATRON Combination Therapy, even if you do not think the problems are connected with the medicine.**

**Do not be alarmed by the list of possible side effects.**

You may not experience any of them.

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## After using PEGATRON Combination Therapy

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### *Storage*

**Store PEGATRON Combination Therapy in the refrigerator (2°C to 8°C). Do not freeze.**

You may remove the REBETOL capsules from the PEGATRON Combination Therapy carton and store them at room temperature (below 25°C).

PEG-Intron Redipen injections are for single use only and must be stored in the refrigerator at 2°C to 8°C (do not freeze).

**After preparation of PEG-Intron powder with sterile Water for Injections in the Redipen injector, use the reconstituted solution immediately or within 24 hours when stored in the refrigerator (2°C to 8°C).**

**Use the injector once only and discard any solution left over.**

**Do not store the REBETOL capsules in the bathroom or near a sink. Do not leave it in the car or on windowsills.**

Heat and dampness can destroy some medicines.

**Keep the two drugs where children cannot reach them.**

A locked cupboard at least 1.5 metres above the ground is a good place to store the REBETOL capsules.

**Keep the REBETOL capsules and the PEG-Intron Redipen injector in their individual packs until it is time to use them.**

If you take your medicine out of the pack it will not keep as well.

### *Disposal*

**Return any unused medicine to your pharmacist.**

**Dispose of the PEG-Intron Redipen injectors and needles safely in a sharps container.**

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## Product description

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### *What it looks like*

**REBETOL** capsules are available as 200 mg ribavirin.

The capsules are opaque white in colour with blue markings of '200 mg' and a stripe on one half of the capsule, and the 'S-P' logo and a stripe on the other half.

The capsules are packaged in blister packs.

**PEG-Intron** Powder for Injection is available as a Redipen injection device

The Redipen injection device is a plastic injection pen containing the PEG-Intron powder and the solvent (Water for Injections) in separate compartments of a two-chamber cartridge.

The prepared/reconstituted solution should be clear, colourless and free of particles.

PEG-Intron is available in five strengths of peginterferon alfa-2b: 50 µg, 80 µg, 100 µg, 120 µg and 150 µg.

### *Ingredients*

Each REBETOL capsule contains:

- ribavirin 200 mg

- microcrystalline cellulose
- lactose
- croscarmellose sodium

- magnesium stearate

The REBETOL capsule shell contains:

- gelatin
- titanium dioxide
- sodium lauryl sulfate
- silicon dioxide

The PEG-Intron Powder for Injection in the Redipen injector contains:

- peginterferon alfa-2b
- dibasic sodium phosphate
- monobasic sodium phosphate
- sucrose (sugar)
- polysorbate 80

### *Supplier*

In Australia:  
Schering-Plough Pty Limited.  
Level 4, 66 Waterloo Road  
North Ryde NSW 2113  
AUSTRALIA

In New Zealand:  
Schering-Plough a division of  
Schering-Plough Animal Health  
Limited  
36 Kitchener Street  
Auckland  
NEW ZEALAND

### *Australian Registration Numbers*

PEGATRON Combination Therapy (PEG-Intron Redipen Injector + REBETOL Capsule):

- PEG-Intron 50 µg + REBETOL  
AUST R 92116
- PEG-Intron 80 µg + REBETOL  
AUST R 92117
- PEG-Intron 100 µg + REBETOL  
AUST R 92118
- PEG-Intron 120 µg + REBETOL  
AUST R 92119

- PEG-Intron 150 µg + REBETOL  
AUST R 92120

### *Date of Preparation*

15 September 2008

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