

# Epoprostenol (Flolan)

## Why is the drug prescribed?

Flolan is used to treat people with pulmonary hypertension. Flolan helps by:

- Opening the blood vessels in the lungs
- Preventing blood clots

This drug has been credited with improving the life expectancy for people with pulmonary hypertension by 3 to 5 years.

## How should this drug be taken?

Flolan is given through an intravenous or IV catheter that a surgeon will place in your chest. The drug is pumped into the body 24 hours a day by a portable battery operated pump. The pump is carried in a waist or shoulder bag.

Because this is a very complex drug, you will have education and home health care at first. Over time, you and family members will be taught to mix and give this drug.

Flolan comes in a powder form that needs to be mixed with a liquid solution everyday. Store the powder and liquid at room temperature away from heat, moisture, and direct light.

Once the drug is mixed, it is hooked up to the pump. The drug needs a constant cool temperature and protection from direct sunlight after it is mixed. Ice packs are used around the medicine inside the protective pouch of the pump bag to keep it cool and away from light.

More on next page →

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## **What special instructions should I follow while using this drug?**

This drug is lifetime therapy. Once you choose to go on this drug it can never be stopped. If the drug is ever stopped or interrupted, it could be life threatening.

The amount of drug is changed by small increases to relieve symptoms of pulmonary hypertension. There is no maximum dose.

You will need an IV catheter that goes into a vein in your chest. Having this kind of IV catheter requires special care to prevent infection. Line infections can be very serious. Follow the directions you are given for dressing changes and site care carefully.

Flolan and all supplies for the pump and mixing the medicine will be shipped directly to your home by one of two companies. Flolan therapy is very expensive, costing about \$50,000 to \$100,000 each year. The nurse will assist you in checking your insurance benefits and other financial options before starting Flolan.

## **What are the side effects of Flolan?**

Call your doctor if these side effects are severe or do not go away:

- Jaw pain
- Flushing
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Rash
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

✦ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).**