

Interleukin-2 (IL-2), Aldesleukin

Printed from <https://www.cancerquest.org/patients/drug-reference/interleukin-2-il-2-aldesleukin> on 06/24/2026



Brand name: Proleukin®

FDA approval: Yes

[Manufacturer Link](#)

Usage:

IL-2 is used to treat metastatic kidney (renal) cancer and metastatic melanoma. IL-2 is administered into a vein (intravenously). It may be combined with other drugs. It is also being investigated for its use in treating some lymphomas and leukemias.¹

¹ Zhang C, Zhang X, Chen X. Interleukin-2 priming chemotherapy: a strategy to improve the remission of refractory/relapsed T cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Med Hypotheses. 2013 Nov;81(5):878-80. [\[PUBMED\]](#)

Mechanism:

Interleukin-2 (IL-2) is a naturally occurring protein that is normally made by the body in small amounts. It allows cells of the immune system to communicate with each other. The drug, Proleukin®, is a man-made version of IL-2. This drug works by activating cells of the immune system (T lymphocytes) to attack and kill cancer cells.¹

Stick

Sphere

Line

Rotate

The diagram above shows the 3D molecular structure of Interleukin-2 with its alpha receptor.

¹ Aldesleukin. MedlinePlus. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a692009.html>

Side effects:

Interleukin-2 has a variety of side effects, including: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, sores in the mouth and throat, tiredness, weakness and dizziness.¹

¹ Aldesleukin. MedlinePlus. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a692009.html>

Contraindications:

Patients need to have normal heart (cardiac) and lung (pulmonary) function as determined by a thallium stress test.