

Bleomycin

Medication Information Leaflet

What is this medication for?

Bleomycin attacks cancer cells and prevents them from dividing and growing in numbers.

It is commonly used together with other medications to treat lymphomas and certain solid tumours such as testicular and skin cancers.

How should I take/use this medication?

Bleomycin may be given as an injection into your vein (intravenous), under the skin (subcutaneous) or into your muscle (intramuscular).

What should I do if I forget to take/use this medication?

If you forget to receive a dose of Bleomycin, reschedule an appointment with your hospital as soon as possible.

What precautions should I take?

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this medication
- You or your partner becomes pregnant or is planning for pregnancy
 - You should use effective birth control during treatment and for a period of time after you finish treatment.
 - Bleomycin may affect your ability to have children in the future. You may wish to discuss this with your doctor before starting treatment.
- You are breastfeeding
 - Do not breastfeed during treatment
- You are taking any other medications, including supplements, traditional medications and herbal remedies

What are some common side-effects of this medication?

Early Side Effects (within days after receiving Bleomycin).

- Fever and chills commonly occur shortly after treatment
 - This may be relieved by taking paracetamol
 - However, seek medical attention if your fever lasts for more than 24 hours after treatment, or if your fever is above 38° C

Delayed Side Effects (within days to weeks after receiving Bleomycin).

- Skin reactions: redness, darkening in some areas, stretch marks, thickening
 - Your skin will slowly return to normal after stopping treatment.
- Nail changes: thickening, discolouration, banding (appearance of lines)
 - Your nails will slowly return to normal after stopping treatment.
- Temporary hair loss or thinning
 - Use a gentle shampoo to wash your hair.
- Nausea or vomiting
 - Take the medications for nausea or vomiting as instructed by your doctor if any.
- Poor appetite and weight loss
 - Take small, frequent meals throughout the day.
- Mouth sores
 - Rinse your mouth after meals using an alcohol-free mouthwash or salt water.
 - Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush.

What are some rare but serious side-effects that I need to seek medical advice immediately?

- Fever of 38° C and above, especially with chills
- Very bad sore throat, changes in voice or mouth sores
- Pain or burning feeling on passing urine
- Very bad skin rash or itch
- Unusual bleeding, bruising, black sticky stools or blood in urine
- Dry cough that does not go away or shortness of breath
- Chest pain or fast heartbeat
- Allergic reaction – this may occur during or several hours after treatment.

The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

- Flushing
- Dizziness

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should see your healthcare professional immediately.

What food or medication should I avoid when I take this medication?

Inform your healthcare professional if you are taking or intend to take any other medication, supplements, traditional medications or herbal remedies.

You may refer to the following website if you need more information: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/>

Disclaimers

If you take more than the recommended dose, please seek medical advice immediately. The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore.

Last updated on September 2019