

## PHARMACY

Drug Information

# Doxorubicin Injection



### What is Doxorubicin?

- Doxorubicin is usually used in combination with other medicines to treat lymphomas and solid tumours.

### How is Doxorubicin Administered?

- Doxorubicin is usually administered into a vein through a slow injection over 5 to 10 minutes.

### Can Doxorubicin be Administered With Other Medications?

- Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications, including Traditional Chinese Medicines, Jamu medicine or supplements.

### What are the Important Side Effects of Doxorubicin?

*Inform the nurses immediately during infusion of Doxorubicin if you experience the following:*

- Allergic reaction  
Doxorubicin may rarely cause an allergic reaction while it's being given. Signs of a reaction can include a rash, flushing, shortness of breath, facial or lip swelling, feeling dizzy, having abdominal, back or chest pain or feeling unwell.
- Drug leakage  
Doxorubicin may leak out of the veins and damage the tissues around the vein. This is called extravasation. Inform the nurse immediately if you have any stinging pain, redness or swelling around the vein. Extravasation is not common but if it happens, it's important that it is managed quickly.
- Medications prescribed by your doctor should be beneficial for your condition even though they may result in some inevitable side effects.

Side Effect	Management
Risk of infection can occur as Doxorubicin can reduce the number of white blood cells in your blood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce risk of infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wash your hands after toileting.</li> <li>- Avoid crowds and people who are sick.</li> <li>- Avoid raw food.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Please proceed to the A&amp;E department immediately if you experience signs of infection such as fever with a temperature of 38°C and above, chills and shivering. Avoid taking Paracetamol (Panadol®) to relieve fever. Be aware that taking Paracetamol may mask fever and hence delay treatment of infection.</li> </ul>
Bruising or bleeding may occur as Doxorubicin can reduce the number of platelets in your blood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce risk of bleeding problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do not pick your nose.</li> <li>- Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush.</li> <li>- Be aware that bleeding may take a longer time to stop.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Please proceed to the A&amp;E department immediately if you experience any severe bleeding (e.g. passing a large amount of fresh blood in urine or stools or passing black sticky stools) or significant bruising.</li> </ul>
Nausea or vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take small, frequent meals.</li> <li>Avoid smells that precipitate nausea.</li> <li>Take medicines for nausea or vomiting prescribed by your doctor.</li> <li>Avoid tight-fitting clothes around the waist.</li> </ul>

Side Effect	Management
Mouth ulcers can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth or in the throat and this can lead to an infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brush your teeth after eating and at bedtime with a soft toothbrush.</li> <li>Rinse and brush your dentures after eating and soak them in denture solution overnight.</li> <li>Rinse your mouth regularly with an alcohol-free mouth gargle or salt water. This will help to reduce chances of an infection</li> </ul>
Rarely, reduction in heart function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may require tests to check how well your heart is working before, during and sometimes, after treatment.</li> <li>If you experience pain or tightness in your chest, feel breathless or notice changes to your heartbeat at any time during or after treatment, please proceed to the A&amp;E department immediately.</li> </ul>
Harmless red or pinkish discolouration of the urine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is expected as it is the colour of Doxorubicin and will last for one to two days after chemotherapy.</li> </ul>
Hair Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wear a wig or hat or use a gentle shampoo.</li> </ul>
Risk of blood disorders/leukemia and secondary cancers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This occurs very rarely. Please discuss with your physician if you have concerns.</li> </ul>

If you develop rashes, facial swelling or shortness of breath after taking the medication, you could be allergic to the medication. Please seek medical attention immediately.

### Are There any Special Precautions That I Need to Take?

- It is important to inform your doctor if you intend to conceive or breastfeed while taking this medication.
- You must not become pregnant during treatment with Doxorubicin and must use effective contraceptive measures during and up to 6 months after stopping treatment. If pregnancy occurs during your treatment, you must inform your doctor immediately.
- Doxorubicin may have an anti-fertility effect, which could be irreversible. You should discuss with your doctor regarding fertility preservation prior to starting treatment.
- You should not breast feed during treatment.

### What Else can I do to Help My Condition?

- Exercise  
Light exercise is recommended as it helps to improve mobility, balance and even emotional well-being. Do avoid strenuous exercise, and rest when you are feeling tired.
- Stay positive  
Understand your condition and take an active role in managing it. Do not be afraid to talk about it with your doctor/ pharmacist/ family members. Repressed feelings can be harmful to your immediate well-being and long-term health.
- Adequate hydration  
Maintain adequate hydration with two to three litres (8 to 12 cups) of fluids per day unless informed by your doctor to restrict fluids. This will decrease your chances of being constipated and also prevent dehydration.
- Medical and dental treatment  
If you need to go into hospital for any reason other than cancer, always inform the doctors and nurses that you are having chemotherapy.  
  
Talk to your cancer doctor if you think you need dental treatment. Always inform your dentist that you are having chemotherapy.

If you have any problem with your treatment, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician.

You can also find useful information with regards to your medication on this website:

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support>



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PECC-PHA-ED-2018-374-v2