

Medication Information Sheet

bleomycin (blee-oh-MY-sin)

This document provides general information about your medication. It does not replace the advice of your health care professional. Always discuss your therapy with your health care professional and refer to the package insert for more details.

Appearance: Clear, colourless solution ; may be mixed into larger bags of fluids

What is this medication for?

- In combination with other drugs for treating many different types of cancer, such as germ cell, lymphomas

What should I do before I have this medication?

- Tell your health care team if you have or had:
 - ◊ kidney or liver disease
 - ◊ lung disease, or if you smoke
 - ◊ radiation therapy to the chest
 - ◊ any allergies
 - ◊ or if you had bleomycin before and had severe side effects

Remember to:

- Tell your health care team about all of the other medications you are taking.
- Keep taking other medications that have been prescribed for you, unless you have been told not to by your health care team.

How will this medication affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?**Talk to your health care team about:**

- How this medication may affect your sexual health.
- How this medication may affect your ability to have a baby, if this applies to you.

This medication may harm an unborn baby. Tell your health care team if you or your partner are pregnant, become pregnant during treatment, or are breastfeeding.

- If there is **any** chance of pregnancy happening, you and your partner together must use **2 effective forms of birth control** at the same time until **6 months** after your last dose. Talk to your health care team about which birth control options are best for you.
- Do not breastfeed while on this medication.

How is this medication given?

- This drug is given through an IV (injected into a vein). Talk to your health care team about your treatment schedule.
- If you missed your treatment appointment, talk to your health care team to find out what to do.

What else do I need to know while on this medication?

- **Will this medication interact with other medications or natural health products?**
 - This medication can interact with other medications, vitamins, foods and natural health products. Interactions can make the treatment not work as well or cause severe side effects.
 - Tell your health care team about all of your:
 - prescription and over-the-counter (non-prescription) medications and all other drugs, such as marijuana (medical or recreational)
 - natural health products such as vitamins, herbal teas, homeopathic medicines, and other supplements
 - Check with your health care team before starting or stopping any of them.
- **What should I do if I feel unwell, have pain, a headache or a fever?**
 - **Always** check your temperature to see if you have a fever **before** taking any medications for fever or pain (such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil)).
 - Fever can be a sign of infection that may need treatment right away.
 - If you take these medications before you check for fever, they may lower your temperature and you may not know you have an infection.

How to check for fever:

Keep a digital (electronic) thermometer at home and take your temperature if you feel hot or

unwell (for example, chills, headache, mild pain).

- ◊ You have a fever if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is:
 - 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time

OR

 - 38.0°C (100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour.

If you do have a fever:

- ◊ **Try to contact your health care team. If you are not able to talk to them for advice, you MUST get emergency medical help right away.**
- ◊ Ask your health care team for the [Fever](#) pamphlet for more information.

If you do not have a fever but have mild symptoms such as headache or mild pain:

- ◊ Ask your health care team about the right medication for you. **Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)** is a safe choice for most people.
- ◊ **Talk to your health care team before you start taking** Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or ASA (Aspirin®), as they may increase your chance of bleeding or interact with your cancer treatment.
- ◊ Talk to your health care team if you already take **low dose aspirin** for a medical condition (such as a heart problem). It may still be safe to take.

What to DO while on this medication:

- DO check with your health care team before getting any vaccinations, surgery, dental work or other medical procedures.

What NOT to DO while on this medication:

- DO NOT smoke or drink alcohol while on treatment without talking to your health care team first. Smoking and drinking can make side effects worse and make your treatment not work as well.

What are the side effects of this medication?

The following table lists side effects that you may have when getting bleomycin. The table is set up to list the most common side effects first and the least common last. It is unlikely that you will have all of the side effects listed and you may have some that are not listed.

Read over the side effect table so that you know what to look for and when to get help. Refer to this table if you experience any side effects while on bleomycin.

Common Side Effects (26 to 50 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p>Darkening or thickening of skin; Rash, itchy skin; Redness, swelling of the hands or feet</p> <p>What to look for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may have cracked, rough, flaking or peeling areas of the skin. You may have thickening of the skin especially on your hands. You may have skin darkening or rash especially near folds or creases, or areas with a lot of rubbing / pressure. Your skin may look red and feel warm. Your skin may itch, burn, sting or feel very tender when touched. <p>The rash may be seen in areas where you have had radiation before.</p> <p>What to do?</p> <p>To prevent and treat itchy skin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use fragrance-free skin moisturizer. Protect your skin from the sun and the cold. Use sunscreen with UVA and UVB protection and a SPF of at least 30. Avoid perfumed products and lotions that contain alcohol. Drink 6 to 8 cups of non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated liquids each day, unless your health care team has told you to drink more or less. <p>Rash may be severe in some rare cases and cause your skin to blister or peel. If this happens, get emergency medical help right away.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p>Fever, Flu-like symptoms</p> <p>You may feel like you have the flu for around 2 days after your IV treatment. These flu-like symptoms may not be signs of an infection.</p> <p>What to look for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may have fever, chills, headache and muscle pain. You may feel tired and have a poor appetite. Symptoms may happen at any time after you receive your treatment and usually go away as your body gets used to the medication. 	<p>Talk to your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>

Common Side Effects (26 to 50 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p>What to do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your temperature to see if you have a fever. Read the above section "What should I do if I feel unwell, have pain, a headache or a fever?". • If you do have a fever, try to speak to your health care team. If you are unable to talk to them for advice, you MUST get emergency medical help right away. 	
<p>Hair thinning or loss (generally mild)</p> <p>What to look for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your hair may begin to become thin or fall out during or after treatment. • In most cases, your hair will grow back after treatment, but the texture or colour may change. • In very rare cases, hair loss may be permanent. <p>What to do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a gentle soft brush. • Do not use hair sprays, bleaches, dyes and perms. 	Talk to your health care team if this bothers you
<p>Mouth sores</p> <p>What to look for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round, painful, white or gray sores inside your mouth that can occur on the tongue, lips, gums, or inside your cheeks. • In more severe cases they may make it hard to swallow, eat or brush your teeth. • They may last for 3 days or longer. <p>What to do?</p> <p>To help prevent mouth sores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take care of your mouth by gently brushing and flossing regularly. • Rinse your mouth often with a homemade mouthwash. • To make a homemade mouthwash, mix 1 teaspoonful of baking soda and 1 teaspoonful of salt in 4 cups (1L) of water. • Do not use store-bought mouthwashes, especially those with alcohol, because they may irritate your mouth. 	Talk to your health care team as soon as you notice mouth or lip sores or if it hurts to eat, drink or swallow

Common Side Effects (26 to 50 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p>If you have mouth sores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid hot, spicy, acidic, hard or crunchy foods. • Your doctor may prescribe a special mouthwash to relieve mouth sores and prevent infection. • Talk to your health care team as soon as you notice mouth or lip sores or if it hurts to eat, drink or swallow. <p>Ask your health care team for the Oral Care (Mouth Care) pamphlet for more information.</p>	
<p>Low appetite, weight loss</p> <p>What to look for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of interest in food or not feeling hungry. • Weight loss. <p>What to do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to eat your favourite foods. • Eat small meals throughout the day. • You may need to take meal supplements to help keep your weight up. • Talk to your health care team if you have no appetite. <p>Ask your health care team for the Loss of Appetite pamphlet for more information.</p>	Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 25 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p>Fatigue</p> <p>What to look for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling of tiredness or low energy that lasts a long time and does not go away with rest or sleep. <p>What to do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be active. Aim to get 30 minutes of moderate exercise (you are able to talk comfortably while exercising) on most days. 	Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 25 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check with your health care team before starting any new exercise. • Pace yourself, do not rush. Put off less important activities. Rest when you need to. • Ask family or friends to help you with things like housework, shopping, and child or pet care. • Eat well and drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water or other liquids every day (unless your health care team has told you to drink more or less). • Avoid driving or using machinery if you are feeling tired. <p>Ask your health care team for the Fatigue pamphlet for more information.</p>	
<p>Nausea and vomiting (usually mild)</p> <p>What to look for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nausea is feeling like you need to throw up. You may also feel light-headed. • You may feel nausea within hours to days after your treatment. <p>What to do?</p> <p>To help prevent nausea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it once it happens. • Drink clear liquids and have small meals. Get fresh air and rest. • Do not eat spicy, fried foods or foods with a strong smell. • Limit caffeine (like coffee, tea) and avoid alcohol. <p>If you have nausea or vomiting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your rescue (as-needed) anti-nausea medication(s) as prescribed. • Ask your health care team for the Nausea & Vomiting pamphlet for more information. • Talk to your health care team if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ nausea lasts more than 48 hours ◦ vomiting lasts more than 24 hours or if it is severe 	<p>Talk to your health care team if nausea lasts more than 48 hours or vomiting lasts more than 24 hours or if severe</p>
<p>Nail changes</p> <p>What to look for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may have changes in nail colour, pain or tenderness, swelling of cuticles, or skin thickening. • Nails will slowly return to normal after treatment ends. 	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 25 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p>What to do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moisturize your nails and cuticles. • Do not use nail polish and fake fingernails until your nails have gone back to normal. • Wear gloves when doing house chores or gardening. 	
<p>Cough and feeling short of breath (may be severe)</p> <p>What to look for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may have a cough and feel short of breath. • Symptoms that commonly occur with a cough are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Wheezing or a whistling breathing ◦ Runny nose ◦ Sore throat ◦ Heartburn ◦ Weight loss ◦ Fevers and chills <p>Rarely this may be severe with chest pain, trouble breathing or coughing up blood.</p> <p>What to do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your temperature to see if you have a fever. Read the above section "What should I do if I feel unwell, have pain, a headache or a fever?". • If you have a fever, try to talk to your health care team. If you are not able to talk to them for advice, you MUST get emergency medical help right away. • If you have a severe cough with chest pain, trouble breathing or you are coughing up blood, get medical help right away. 	<p>Talk to your health care team. If you are not able to talk to your health care team for advice, and you have a fever or severe symptoms, you MUST get emergency medical help right away</p>

Other rare, but serious side effects are possible.

If you experience ANY of the following, speak to your cancer health care provider or get emergency medical help right away:

- trouble seeing, speaking, or using your arms and legs
- any new pain in your belly or arms
- pain, swelling and hardening of the vein in an arm or leg
- itchiness, rash, swollen lips, face or tongue, chest and throat tightness, usually during or shortly after the medication was given
- pain, burning, redness, or swelling of your skin where the medication was injected
- yellowish skin or eyes, unusually dark (or red-brown) pee

- feeling unusually tired, bruising easily
- peeing less than usual, new pain in your lower back, swelling in your hands, ankles, feet or other areas of your body
- weight gain that is not normal for you

Who do I contact if I have questions or need help?

My cancer health care provider is: _____

During the day I should contact: _____

Evenings, weekends and holidays: _____

Other Notes:

For more links on how to manage your symptoms go to www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms.

The information set out in the medication information sheets, regimen information sheets, and symptom management information (for patients) contained in the Drug Formulary (the "Formulary") is intended to be used by health professionals and patients for informational purposes only. The information is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, drug interactions or side effects of a certain drug, nor should it be used to indicate that use of a particular drug is safe, appropriate or effective for a given condition.

A patient should always consult a healthcare provider if he/she has any questions regarding the information set out in the Formulary. The information in the Formulary is not intended to act as or replace medical advice and should not be relied upon in any such regard. All uses of the Formulary are subject to clinical judgment and actual prescribing patterns may not follow the information provided in the Formulary.