bleomycin (blee-o-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.

Other Name: Generic brand(s) available, Blenoxane®

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 Hodgkin's disease, lymphomas, head and neck cancers, or testicular cancer.

What should I do before I have this medication?

- Tell your doctor if you have/had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have/had chickenpox (or have recently been exposed to someone who has had chickenpox), shingles, kidney disease, liver disease or lung disease, any allergies, if you smoke, or if you had bleomycin before with severe side effects.
- Bleomycin may harm the unborn baby.
- Let your doctor know if you are breastfeeding, pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- People who have cancer or leukemia are at a higher risk of developing other cancers/leukemias (usually some years later) or blood clots. Some cancer medications, such as bleomycin, may increase these risks, especially if used for a prolonged period of time. You should discuss any concerns with your doctor.

How will this medication affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?

- Do not use this drug if you are pregnant. If there is ANY chance that you or your partner may become pregnant, you and your partner together must: Use 2 effective forms of birth control at the same time while taking this drug: Keep using birth control until 6 months after the last dose (general recommendation). Discuss with your healthcare team.
- Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant.
- Do not breastfeed while taking this drug.
- Effects on Fertility: Unknown

How is this medication given?

- This drug is given by injection.

*The most updated version and more symptom control information can be found on: http://www.cancercare.on.ca/druginfo
Prepared with input from the Cancer Care Ontario-Medication Information Sheets Working Group.
May 2018
What else do I need to know while on this medication?

- This medication can interact with other medications and can result in the treatment not working as well or cause severe side effects.
- Make sure your health care team knows about all your medications (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals and supplements). Check with your health care team before starting or stopping any of them.
- Check with your doctor before having any vaccinations. Check with your doctor before any surgery or dental work.
- Do not take ASA (Aspirin®, acetylsalicylic acid) without your doctor's knowledge and consent. For headache, fever, or occasional aches and pains, use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) instead. Many non-prescription medications contain ASA; always ask your pharmacist's advice when choosing a product.
- If a doctor has advised you to take ASA to prevent heart disease or stroke, please discuss this with your oncologist (cancer doctor) before starting treatment.

What are the side effects of this medication?

The following side effects are common or severe. You may not have all of the side effects. Other side effects may occur. If you have any unusual or bothersome symptoms, discuss with your doctor.

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| • Use a gentle soft brush; care should be taken with hair sprays, bleaches, dyes and perms.  
  • Your hair usually grows back after your treatment ends, but the texture or colour may change. |                         |
| **Flu-like feeling** (fever, chills without signs of infection such as sore throat, cough, or blistering rash on skin) |                         |
| • May happen in hours to days after drug is given / after starting treatment.  
  • These side effects may go away as your body gets used to the drug.  
  • Contact your doctor or nurse if these feelings bother you.  
  • May take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets as needed. | Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe |
## More Common Side Effects

### Mouth sores
- Maintain good mouth hygiene. Regular teethbrushing with a soft toothbrush or Toothette®, and regular use of mouthwashes, especially after meals and at bedtime. Use alcohol-free mouthwashes.
- Instead, try a homemade mouthwash: Mix 1 teaspoonful of baking soda and 1 teaspoonful of salt in 4 cups (1L) of water.
- Avoid hot, spicy, acidic, hard or crunchy foods.
- Check with your doctor or nurse as soon as you notice sores in mouth/lips or pain with swallowing. Your doctor may prescribe a prescription mouthwash to relieve mouth sores and prevent infection.
- Also see Mouth Care pamphlet.*

### Nausea and vomiting
- May occur in hours to days after the dose is given/after treatment starts.
- Drink clear fluids and avoid large meals. Get fresh air and rest.
- Limit spicy, fried foods or foods with a strong smell.
- Take anti-nausea drug(s) exactly as directed by your doctor. It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it.
- Contact your doctor if nausea lasts more than 1 day or if any vomiting occurs.
- Also see Nausea & Vomiting pamphlet.*

### Lung problems
(increased cough, breathing problems, chest pain, coughing blood)
- Get emergency medical help right away

### Rash; dry, itchy skin; darkening or thickening of skin; sensitivity to sunlight, pain, peeling of skin on fingers and toes
- Stay out of the sun; wear sunblock, a hat and cover exposed skin.
- Use daily moisturizer.
- Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe

## Less Common Side Effects, but may be Severe

### Allergic reaction
(fever, severe rash, itchiness, swollen face, lip or tongue, chest or throat tightness)
- May occur during or shortly after the drug is given.
- Get emergency medical help right away

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| **Stroke**  
(sudden loss of vision, speech, of the use of your limb(s)) | Get emergency medical help right away |
| **Heart attack**  
(cHEST pain, shortness of breath) | |
| **Bleeding/clotting disorder**  
(may include bleeding from more than 1 site, bruising, signs of blood clots, kidney/liver/lung problems, fever, confusion) | Get emergency medical help right away |
| **Acute kidney failure, bleeding, breakdown of red blood cells** | Get emergency medical help right away |
| **Heart problems**  
(irregular heartbeat, chest pain, fainting, swelling, shortness of breath) | Get emergency medical help right away |
| **Redness/rash in areas where you’ve previously received radiation** | Get emergency medical help right away |

For more links on how to manage your symptoms go to [www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms](http://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.

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