

# bevacizumab

**Pronunciation:** be-vuh-SIZ-uh-mab

**Other Name(s):** Avastin®; Mvasi®; Zirabev®; Bambevi®, Abevmy®, Aybintio®, Vegzelma™

**Appearance:** Clear, colourless solution mixed into larger bags of fluids

This handout gives general information about this cancer medication.

You will learn:

- who to contact for help
- what the medication is
- how it is given
- what to expect while on medication



This handout was created by Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) together with patients and their caregivers who have also gone through cancer treatment. It is meant to help support you through your cancer treatment and answer some of your questions.

**This information does not replace the advice of your health care team. Always talk to your health care team about your treatment.**

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

## What is this treatment for?

- For treating certain types of colorectal, lung, brain, ovarian, cervical, kidney and other cancers. It may be used alone or with other chemotherapy drugs, depending on the type of cancer.
- Bevacizumab is available as a biosimilar medication. See our [biosimilar](#) pamphlet for more information.

## What should I do before I start this treatment?

- Tell your health care team if you have or had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have / had:
  - high blood pressure
  - surgery in the last 28 days (or will be having surgery or dental procedures)
  - heart problems (including heart attack or stroke)
  - kidney problems
  - coughed up blood or had other bleeding
  - any allergies



### 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.

You will have a blood test to check for hepatitis B before starting treatment. See the [Hepatitis B and Cancer Medications](#) pamphlet for more information.

## How is this treatment given?

- This drug is given through an IV (injected into a vein). Talk to your health care team about your treatment schedule.
- Bevacizumab will be given over a longer period of time for the first cycle. If you have no problems with this infusion, it will be given over a shorter time for the following cycles.
- If you missed your treatment appointment, talk to your health care team to find out what to do.

## Other important things for you to know about this treatment

While taking bevacizumab, wounds may take longer to heal than normal or may not fully heal. Tell your health care team if you plan to have any surgery (including dental surgery). Your health care team may ask you to stop bevacizumab treatment for 28 days or more before any scheduled surgery.

### DO this while on treatment

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

### DO NOT do this while on treatment



- ✗ 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.

## Will this treatment interact with other medications or natural health products?

Yes, this medication can interact with other medications, vitamins, foods and natural health products. Interactions can make this medication 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
- 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.



### Talk to your health care team **BEFORE** taking or using these :

- Anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen (Advil<sup>®</sup> or Motrin<sup>®</sup>), naproxen (Aleve<sup>®</sup>) or Aspirin<sup>®</sup>.
- Over-the-counter products such as dimenhydrinate (Gravol<sup>®</sup>)
- Natural health products such as St. John's Wort
- Supplements such as vitamin C
- Grapefruit juice
- Alcoholic drinks
- Tobacco
- All other drugs, such as marijuana or cannabis (medical or recreational)

## What to do if you 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.

## How will this treatment affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?

**Talk to your health care team about:**

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

This treatment 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 at least **6 months** after your last treatment dose. Talk to your health care team about which birth control options are best for you.
- Do not breastfeed while on this treatment, and for at least **6 months** after the last dose.

## What are the side effects of this treatment?

The following table lists side effects that you may have when getting bevacizumab. 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. Keep this paper during your treatment so that you can refer to it if you need to.

Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Unusual bleeding or bruising</b></p> <p>(May be severe)</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch for signs of bleeding:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ bleeding from your gums</li> <li>◦ unusual or heavy nosebleeds</li> <li>◦ bruising easily or more than normal</li> <li>◦ black coloured stools (poo) or blood in your stools (poo)</li> <li>◦ coughing up red or brown coloured mucus</li> <li>◦ dizziness, constant headache or changes in your vision</li> <li>◦ heavy vaginal bleeding</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check with your healthcare team before you go to the dentist or if you have a surgery planned.</li> <li>• Take care of your mouth and use a soft toothbrush.</li> <li>• Try to prevent cuts and bruises.</li> <li>• Ask your health care team what activities are safe for you.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have signs of bleeding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have a small bleed, clean the area with soap and water or a saline (saltwater) rinse. Apply pressure for at least 10 minutes.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have bleeding that does not stop or is severe (very heavy), you must get emergency medical help right away.</b></p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if you have any signs of bleeding. If you have bleeding that doesn't stop or is severe, you <b>MUST</b> get emergency medical help right away.</p>

Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Fatigue</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling of tiredness or low energy that lasts a long time and does not go away with rest or sleep.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be active. Aim to get 30 minutes of moderate exercise (you are able to talk comfortably while exercising) on most days.</li> <li>Check with your health care team before starting any new exercise.</li> <li>Pace yourself, do not rush. Put off less important activities. Rest when you need to.</li> <li>Ask family or friends to help you with things like housework, shopping, and child or pet care.</li> <li>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).</li> <li>Avoid driving or using machinery if you are feeling tired.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Fatigue</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>
<p><b>High blood pressure</b></p> <p>(May be severe)</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are usually no signs of high blood pressure.</li> <li>Rarely, you may have headaches, shortness of breath or nosebleeds.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check your blood pressure regularly.</li> <li>Your doctor may prescribe medication to treat high blood pressure.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have a severe headache get emergency help right away as it may be a sign your blood pressure is too high.</b></p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>



Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Proteins in Urine</b></p> <p>(May be severe)</p> <p>Your health care team may do urine tests to check for proteins in your pee.</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swelling in your face, legs, or belly.</li> <li>• Recent weight gain that is not normal for you.</li> <li>• Foamy, frothy, or bubbly-looking pee.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>
<p><b>Headache, mild joint, muscle pain or cramps</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headache, new pain in your muscles or joints, muscle cramps, or feeling achy.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take pain medication (acetaminophen or opioids such as codeine, morphine, hydromorphone, oxycodone) as prescribed.</li> <li>• Read the above section: "<b>What should I do if I feel unwell, have pain, a headache or a fever?</b>" before taking acetaminophen (Tylenol®), ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or Aspirin. These medications may hide an infection that needs treatment or they may increase your risk of bleeding.</li> <li>• Rest often and try light exercise (such as walking) as it may help.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Pain</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Diarrhea</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loose, watery, unformed stool (poo) that may happen days to weeks after you get your treatment.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>If you have diarrhea:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take anti-diarrhea medication if your health care team prescribed it or told you to take it.</li> <li>Do not eat foods or drinks with artificial sweetener (like chewing gum or 'diet' drinks), coffee and alcohol, until your diarrhea has stopped.</li> <li>Eat many small meals and snacks instead of 2 or 3 large meals.</li> <li>Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day, unless your health care team has told you to drink more or less.</li> <li>Talk to your health care team if you can't drink 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day when you have diarrhea. You may need to drink special liquids with salt and sugar, called Oral Rehydration Therapy.</li> <li>Talk to your health care team if your diarrhea does not improve after 24 hours of taking diarrhea medication or if you have diarrhea more than 7 times in one day.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Diarrhea</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if no improvement after 24 hours of taking diarrhea medication or if severe (more than 7 times in one day).</p>
<p><b>Blood clots</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blood clots can cause pain, swelling and hardening of the vein in the body part that has the clot.</li> <li>If the clot is severe it can block a big artery or vein.</li> </ul> <p>A blood clot in your lungs can cause: coughing, problems breathing, pain in your chest or coughing up blood.</p> <p>A blood clot in you brain (stroke) can cause: trouble seeing, speaking, or using your arms and legs.</p> <p>A blood clot in your heart (heart attack) can cause: chest pain, shortness of breath and pain in your belly or arms.</p>	<p>Get emergency medical help right away.</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p>Get emergency medical help right away.</p>	
<p><b>Nausea and vomiting</b></p> <p>(Generally mild)</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nausea is feeling like you need to throw up. You may also feel light-headed.</li> <li>• You may feel nausea within hours to days after your treatment.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>To help prevent nausea:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it once it happens.</li> <li>• Drink clear liquids and have small meals. Get fresh air and rest.</li> <li>• Do not eat spicy, fried foods or foods with a strong smell.</li> <li>• Limit caffeine (like coffee, tea) and avoid alcohol.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have nausea or vomiting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your rescue (as needed) anti-nausea medication(s) as prescribed.</li> <li>• Talk to your health care team if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ nausea lasts more than 48 hours</li> <li>◦ vomiting lasts more than 24 hours or if it is severe</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Nausea &amp; Vomiting</a> pamphlet for more information.</li> </ul>	<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>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Constipation</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having bowel movements (going poo) less often than normal.</li> <li>• Small hard stools (poo) that look like pellets.</li> <li>• The need to push hard and strain to have any stool (poo) come out.</li> <li>• Stomach ache or cramps.</li> <li>• A bloated belly, feeling of fullness, or discomfort.</li> <li>• Leaking of watery stools (poo).</li> <li>• Lots of gas or burping.</li> <li>• Nausea or vomiting.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>To help prevent constipation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to eat more fiber rich foods like fruits with skin, leafy greens and whole grains.</li> <li>• Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day unless your health care team has told you to drink more or less.</li> <li>• Be Active. Exercise can help to keep you regular.</li> <li>• If you take opioid pain medication, ask your health care team if eating more fibre is right for you.</li> </ul> <p><b>To help treat constipation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have not had a bowel movement in 2 to 3 days you may need to take a laxative (medication to help you poo) to help you have regular bowel movements. Ask your health care team what to do.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Constipation</a> Pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Cough and feeling short of breath</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may have a cough and feel short of breath.</li> <li>Symptoms that commonly occur with a cough are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wheezing or a whistling breathing</li> <li>Runny nose</li> <li>Sore throat</li> <li>Heartburn</li> <li>Weight loss</li> <li>Fever and chills</li> </ul> </li> <li>Rarely this may be severe with chest pain, trouble breathing or coughing up blood.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check your temperature to see if you have a fever. Read the above section <b>"What should I do if I feel unwell, have pain, a headache or a fever?"</b>.</li> <li>If you have a fever, try to talk to your health care team. <b>If you are not able to talk to them for advice, you MUST get emergency medical help right away.</b></li> <li><b>If you have a severe cough with chest pain, trouble breathing or you are coughing up blood, get medical help right away.</b></li> </ul>	<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 <b>MUST</b> get emergency medical help right away.</p>
<p><b>Trouble Sleeping</b></p> <p>Your medications may cause trouble sleeping. It may get better once your body gets used to the medication or when your treatment ends.</p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may find it hard to fall asleep or stay asleep.</li> <li>How well you sleep may change over your treatment. For example, you may have several nights of poor sleep followed by a night of better sleep.</li> <li>You may wake up too early or not feel well-rested after a night's sleep.</li> <li>You may feel tired or sleepy during the day.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>Low appetite</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of interest in food or not feeling hungry.</li> <li>• Weight loss.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to eat your favourite foods.</li> <li>• Eat small meals throughout the day.</li> <li>• You may need to take meal supplements to help keep your weight up.</li> <li>• Talk to your health care team if you have no appetite.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your health care team for the <a href="#">Loss of Appetite</a> pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>
<p><b>Heart problems</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may have an irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, chest pain or fainting spells.</li> <li>• Swelling in your legs, ankles and belly.</li> <li>• Sharp pain in the centre or left side of the chest (often worsens when taking a deep breath).</li> <li>• Extreme tiredness that prevents you from exercising or doing normal activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p>Get emergency medical help right away.</p>	<p>Get emergency medical help right away.</p>
<p><b>Rash; dry, itchy skin</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may have cracked, rough, flaking or peeling areas of the skin.</li> <li>• Your skin may look red and feel warm, like a sunburn.</li> <li>• Your skin may itch, burn, sting or feel very tender when touched.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<p><b>What to do?</b></p> <p><b>To prevent and treat dry skin:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use fragrance-free skin moisturizer.</li> <li>• Protect your skin from the sun and the cold.</li> <li>• Use sunscreen with UVA and UVB protection and a SPF of at least 30.</li> <li>• Avoid perfumed products and lotions that contain alcohol.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p><b>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.</b></p>	
<p><b>Fever, chills, infection</b></p> <p><b>What to look for?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you feel hot or unwell (for example if you have chills or a new cough), you <b>must</b> check your temperature to see if you have a fever.</li> <li>• Do not take medications that treat a fever before you take your temperature (for example, Tylenol®, acetaminophen, Advil® or ibuprofen).</li> <li>• Do not eat or drink anything hot or cold right before taking your temperature.</li> </ul> <p>You have a fever if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time OR</li> <li>• 38.0°C (100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour.</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash your hands often to prevent infection.</li> <li>• Check with your doctor before getting any vaccines, surgeries, medical procedures or visiting your dentist.</li> <li>• Keep a digital thermometer at home so you can easily check for a fever.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have a fever:</b></p> <p><b>If you have a fever, try to contact your health care team. If you are unable to talk to the team for advice, you must get emergency medical help right away.</b></p>	<p>If you have a fever, try to contact your health care team. If you are unable to talk to the team for advice, you <b>MUST</b> get emergency medical help right away.</p>

Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
Side effects and what to do	When to contact health care team
<b>Hoarseness (raspy voice)</b>  <b>What to look for?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your voice may sound breathy, raspy or strained.</li> <li>• You may hear changes in loudness or how high or low your voice is.</li> </ul> <b>What to do?</b>  Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.	Talk to your health care team if it does not improve or if it is severe.

**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:**

- Red dots on skin, pale skin and/or severe tiredness, passing little or no pee or dark-coloured pee
- Flushing, swollen lips, face or tongue, wheezing and/or throat tightness, usually during or shortly after the drug is given
- Severe belly pain, bloating or feeling of fullness and severe constipation or sudden, severe pain in belly or stomach area
- Teeth, mouth or jaw pain and swelling, poor healing of mouth sores, unusual discharge from gums, loosening of teeth and the feeling of numbness or heaviness in the jaw
- Severe headache, fainting, seizures, confusion and vision loss
- Wounds that take longer to heal or not fully heal
- Sudden severe pain in your chest, upper back, that moves up your neck or down your back, when you didn't hurt yourself
- High fever and red, very painful swelling of the skin, which may feel hot or turn purplish



For more information on how to manage your symptoms ask your health care provider, or visit:  
<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms>.

## Notes

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### July 2024 Updated/Revised information sheet

*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.*