



For the Patient: Bleomycin
Other names: Bleo, BLENOXANE®, NSC-125066,
BLM

BC Cancer Agency

- **Bleomycin** (blee-oh-MICE-in) is a drug that is used to treat many kinds of cancer. It is a clear liquid that is usually injected into a vein.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to bleomycin before receiving bleomycin.
- A **blood test** may be taken before each treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- Other drugs such as digoxin (LANOXIN®) and phenytoin (DILANTIN®) may **interact** with bleomycin. Tell your doctor if you are taking these or any other drugs as you may need extra blood tests or your dose may need to be changed. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs.
- **Oxygen** may increase the risk of lung problems during and after treatment with bleomycin. Lung problems can occur months or years after treatment. **Tell** your doctors or dentists that you have been treated with bleomycin before you receive any type of surgery. You should carry a **wallet card** (e.g., BC Cancer Agency bleomycin card) or wear a **wrist bracelet** (e.g., MEDICALERT®) to alert health providers. Avoid activities which use increased oxygen pressure, such as scuba diving, for the rest of your life.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of bleomycin.
- Bleomycin may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with bleomycin. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- **Tell** doctors or dentists that you are being treated with bleomycin before you receive any treatment from them.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Allergic reactions may rarely occur. Signs of an allergic reaction are dizziness, confusion and wheezing. This can occur immediately or several hours after receiving bleomycin and usually only with the first or second dose.</p>	<p>Tell your nurse if this happens while you are receiving bleomycin or contact your oncologist immediately if this happens after you leave the clinic.</p>
<p>Nausea and vomiting may occur after your treatment.</p>	<p>You may be given a prescription for antinausea drug(s) to take before your chemotherapy treatment and/or at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred, so follow directions closely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Try the ideas in <i>Food Choices to Control Nausea</i>.
<p>Skin rashes may occur.</p>	<p>To help itching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can use calamine lotion • If very irritating, call your doctor during office hours • Otherwise make sure to mention it at you next visit
<p>Fever and chills may occur shortly after treatment with bleomycin. Fever should last no longer than 24 hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 3-4 hours. • Fever which occurs more than a few days after treatment may be the sign of an infection. See details below.
<p>Loss of appetite and weight loss are common and may persist long after discontinuation of bleomycin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try ideas in <i>High Energy High Protein Ideas</i> and in <i>Healthy Eating Using High Energy, High Protein Foods</i>.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Sore mouth may occur a few days after treatment. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth or in the throat. Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. If your gums bleed, use gauze instead of a brush. Use baking soda instead of toothpaste. • Make a mouthwash with ½ teaspoon baking soda or salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day. • Try soft, bland foods like puddings, milkshakes and cream soups. • Avoid spicy, crunchy or acidic food, and very hot or cold foods. • Try ideas in <i>Easy to Chew, Easy to Swallow Food Ideas</i>.
<p>Hair loss or hair thinning sometimes occurs with bleomycin. Your hair will grow back once you stop treatment with bleomycin. Colour and texture may change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush. • Care should be taken with use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes and perms.
<p>Your skin may darken in some areas such as your hands, elbows and knees.</p>	<p>This will slowly return to normal once you stop treatment with bleomycin.</p>

SEE YOUR DOCTOR OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer); chills; cough; pain or burning when you pass urine.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE

- **Signs of lung problems such as shortness of breath, wheezing or coughing.**
- Severe **skin reaction.**
- Signs of **heart problems** such as shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, swelling of feet or lower legs.
- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- Signs of **kidney problems** such as lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs

CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting.
- Redness, swelling, pain or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth or throat.
- Skin rash or itching.

