

Bleomycin

Names	The generic drug name is bleomycin (blee-oh-MYE-sin). Blenoxane® is a brand name. There may be other names for this medication.
How is Bleomycin Given?	Bleomycin can be injected intravenously (IV - into a vein), intramuscularly (IM - into a muscle) or subcutaneously (SQ -under the skin). For pleural effusions, it is placed into the chest cavity through a chest tube.
Why am I Taking Bleomycin?	Bleomycin is used alone or with other medications to treat head and neck cancers; cancers of the penis, testicles, cervix, and vulva; several types of lymphoma; and pleural effusions (excess fluid in the space between the lining of the lung and the chest wall) caused by cancerous tumors.
How Does Bleomycin Work?	<p>Cancers are diseases in which abnormal cells reproduce uncontrollably. Your chemo schedule is based upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• your cancer type and how fast the cancer cells reproduce• the phase of the cell cycle when the medication is most effective <p>Bleomycin is an antitumor antibiotic - an antibiotic used only to treat cancer. It interferes with certain phases of the cell cycle, which can slow or stop the growth of the cancer.</p> <p>Many chemo medications identify and attack cancer cells because they reproduce quickly. Some cells in your body normally reproduce quickly and they are likely to be harmed by chemo. These normal cells will eventually grow back and be healthy. During treatment, however, you may experience side effects.</p>
What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin Bleomycin?	<p>Tell your doctor if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have had an allergic reaction to bleomycin• have or have ever had lung or kidney disease• are pregnant or breastfeeding

This drug may interact with other medications or cause harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, or supplements that you are taking.

What are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Skin changes: Redness, blistering, tenderness, or thickening of the skin; skin darkening; rash
- Hair loss
- Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, weight loss
- Mouth sores
- Lung problems - risk is greater for the elderly, those on higher doses, and those who have pre-existing lung/breathing problems. There is a maximum lifetime dose of bleomycin. Your health care professional will monitor the amount of bleomycin you receive and your lung function.
- Phlebitis (inflammation of veins)

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- Drink at least 2-3 quarts of fluid, especially water, every 24 hours, unless your doctor tells you to limit your fluids.
- Skin care: Use sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher when you are outdoors, even for a short time. Wear wide-brimmed hats, long-sleeved shirts, and pants. Avoid sun lamps, tanning booths, and tanning beds. If you develop a rash, keep the area clean and dry. Check with your doctor before using any products on the rash.
- Some people cut their hair when it begins to fall out. Wigs and head coverings are available in the Resource Center (inside cafeteria on first floor of the hospital). Phone:716-845-1729.
- Nausea: Avoid spicy, greasy, and acidic foods. Try eating small meals more frequently instead of 3 large meals a day. Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen nausea.
- Mouth care is very important. To minimize mouth problems, rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ teaspoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of water after every meal and at bedtime. Brush your teeth and gums often with a soft toothbrush (run it under warm water). Avoid smoking, alcohol, and mouthwashes that contain alcohol.

When Should I Call the Doctor?

Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital ER if you have life-threatening symptoms such as a severe allergic reaction: swelling/tingling of mouth, face, tongue, or throat; wheezing; trouble breathing; heart palpitations; chest tightness; dizziness

Continued on next page

Call your doctor immediately if you have:

- any sign of infection: fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, chills, cough, sore throat, burning or pain upon urination, or redness, swelling, or pain at the injection site
- any sign of lung problems: difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, wheezing, fever, or chills

Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have:

- painful mouth or nausea that makes it difficult to eat or drink
- persistent loss of appetite or weight loss of 5 pounds or more in 1 week
- extreme tiredness that interferes with your normal activities
- rash that is bothersome

What Else
Should I Know
About
Bleomycin?

- Bleomycin can cause severe lung problems. Call your doctor immediately if you have breathing problems, wheezing, fever, or chills.
- Tell all your doctors, dentists, surgeons that you are on bleomycin.
- This drug may have harmful effects on an unborn child. Use effective methods of birth control during your treatment.
- Avoid taking aspirin or any products that contain aspirin (such as some cold medicines) unless you have talked to your doctor.
- Some people who are being treated with bleomycin for lymphoma can have a severe allergic reaction immediately or several hours after the first or second dose is given. If you experience any of the following symptoms, call your doctor immediately if you have difficulty breathing, fever, chills, fainting, dizziness, blurred vision, upset stomach, or confusion.
- If you would like more information about bleomycin, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.