

Carmustine

Names	The generic drug name is carmustine (kar-MUS-teen). BiCNU® is a brand name. There may be other names for this medication. (There is a wafer form of carmustine, called Gliadel®, which is left in the space made after a brain tumor has been surgically removed. This profile only discusses the injected form of this medication.)
How is Carmustine Administered?	Your medicine will be given by given by injection into a vein (intravenous, IV), usually in your arm, wrist, hand or chest.
What is it Used For?	This drug is used to treat come types of brain tumors, as well as Hodgkin's lymphoma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and multiple myeloma.
How Does it Work?	<p>Cancer is a group of diseases in which abnormal cells divide without control. Both normal and cancer cells go through cycles that include a resting phase, active growing phases, and division. Your chemotherapy schedule is based upon the type of cancer you have, the rate at which they divide, and the times when each drug is the most likely to be effective. This is why chemotherapy is typically given in cycles.</p> <p>Carmustine is in a class of drugs known as alklyting agents. Alkylating agents are most active in the resting phase of the cells. Carmustine is a nitrosurea drug and has the rather unique ability to cross the blood-brain barrier.</p>
What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin Carmustine?	<p>Tell your doctor if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have had an allergic reaction to carmustine or have other allergies• have, or have ever had, liver, lung, or kidney disease• have any kind of infection, or if you have had other chemotherapy• are pregnant or breastfeeding <p>This drug may interact with other medications. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about <u>all</u> prescription or over-the-counter medication, vitamins, and herbal supplements you are taking.</p>

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Decreased white blood cell and platelet counts, which can increase your risk for infections and bleeding problems. A decrease in red blood cell count is less common, but can produce anemia (fatigue).
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Skin problems: facial flushing, pale skin, darkened skin
- Headache
- Burning sensation or pain at the IV site
- Low blood pressure (hypotension) with high doses (less common)
- Dizziness, loss of coordination or balance (less common)
- Red eyes and/or blurry vision (less common)

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- Low white count: Stay away from people with colds, flu, or other infections. Wash your hands often. Talk to your doctor before you have any vaccinations (immunizations), such as a flu shot.
- Low platelet count: Use an electric razor, be careful when handling sharp objects, stay away from rough sports or other situations where you could be bruised or injured.
- To help prevent nausea, avoid fried, spicy, and fatty foods on chemo day and for 2-3 days afterwards. Eating small, frequent meals may also help.
- If you have nausea or vomiting, try foods and drinks that are 'easy on the stomach' or made you feel better when you were sick in the past. Examples: bland foods, ginger ale, dry crackers, and toast. The 'BRAT' diet (**B**ananas, **R**ice, **A**pplesauce, and **T**oast) may also help. Do not stay on the BRAT diet for too long because it will not meet your nutrition requirements. If you cannot eat or drink other foods after 2-3 days on the BRAT diet, contact your doctor.
- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen nausea and vomiting.
- Use sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher when you are outdoors, and wear protective clothing that covers your skin. Do not put anything on a rash unless your doctor approves it.
- Drink 2-3 quarts of fluids every day, especially water, unless your doctor gives you different instructions.
- Mouth care is very important. 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. (Soften it further by running it under warm water before brushing.) Avoid smoking, alcohol, and mouthwashes that contain alcohol.

When Should I
Call the
Doctor?

Call your doctor immediately if you have:

- any sign of infection: fever of 100.5°F (38°C) or higher, chills, cough, sore throat, pain or burning upon urination; redness or tenderness along a vein, at an IV site, or at any other wound or skin irritation
- any sign of an allergic reaction: itching or hives, swelling in your face or hands, swelling or tingling in your mouth or throat, chest tightness, trouble breathing, dizziness, or palpitations
- unusual bruising or bleeding: bleeding lasts more than 10-15 minutes or that causes dizziness; black/bloody stools or vomit; blood in your urine or mucus, unusually heavy menstrual bleeding, spontaneous bleeding from your gums or nose, or superficial bleeding into the skin that appears as a rash of pinpoint-sized reddish-purple spots (petechiae)
- persistent cough or difficulty catching your breath

Call your doctor as soon as possible if you experience:

- nausea or vomiting that is not relieved by prescribed medication or that prevents you from eating or drinking
- hair loss
- yellowing of skin or eyes
- dizziness

What Else
Should I Know
About
Carmustine?

- Avoid taking cimetidine (Tagamet®), digoxin, and phenytoin (Dilantin®) while on carmustine.
- Check with your doctor before taking aspirin or ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®) while you are using carmustine.
- This drug may have harmful effects on an unborn child. Use an effective, barrier form of birth control, such as condoms or diaphragms, if you or your partner is taking carmustine.
- Do not breastfeed while on carmustine.
- Carmustine may cause sterility in men and menopause in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with carmustine.
- Keep all appointments with your doctor and the laboratory.
- Damage to your lungs may occur with high dose or long term carmustine therapy. This may occur up to 3 years after treatment has ended. Your doctor will monitor your lung function before and during treatment
- If you would like more information about carmustine, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.