



KEEP ALL MEDICINE OUT OF THE SIGHT AND REACH OF CHILDREN

ABVD

What is ABVD?

ABVD is the name of a chemotherapy treatment used for Hodgkin lymphoma. It is made up of the drugs:

- A – Doxorubicin (**Adriamycin**)
- B – **Bleomycin**
- V – **Vinblastine**
- D – **Dacarbazine (DTIC)**

How ABVD is administered

You have ABVD drugs into your bloodstream (intravenously).

You usually have ABVD chemotherapy as cycles of treatment. The treatment is given every 2 weeks x 6- 8 cycles.

Common side effects

- **Neutropaenia**
 - Temporary drop in the number of blood cells made by the bone marrow, causing an increased risk of getting an infection from a drop in white blood cells – it is harder to fight infections and you can become very ill. You may have headaches, aching muscles, a cough, sore throat, pain passing urine or feel cold and shivery – fever / high temperature.
 - Contact your treatment center straight away if you have any of these effects or if your temperature goes above 38°C
- **Anaemia**
 - Tiredness and breathlessness due to a drop in red blood cells (anaemia) – you may need a blood transfusion
 - Bruising more easily due to a drop in platelets – you may have nosebleeds, bleeding gums after brushing your teeth, or lots of tiny red spots or bruises on your arms or legs (known as petechia)
 - Some of these side effects can be life threatening, particularly infections. You should contact your treatment centre if you have any of these effects. Your doctor will check your blood counts regularly to see how well your bone marrow is working.
- **Fatigue (tiredness) during and after treatment** – most people find their energy levels are back to normal within 6 months to a year
- **A hypersensitivity reaction happens to as many as half the people having bleomycin, causing high temperature (fever) and chills while you have the drug** – if you have a high temperature the night after your treatment, tell your doctor or nurse when you go for your next dose. A test dose is usually given under the skin around the navel 24hrs before treatment is given.
- **Skin reactions, such as reddening, darkening or thickening of the skin or nails or dry, peeling skin at the fingertips.** You are most likely to develop these side effects 2 to 3 weeks after you start your treatment
- **Hair loss** – almost everyone has complete head and body hair loss, which usually begins 2 to 5 weeks after the treatment starts. Your hair will grow back when the treatment ends



KEEP ALL MEDICINE OUT OF THE SIGHT AND REACH OF CHILDREN

- Loss of appetite
- Feeling or being sick – doxorubicin and dacarbazine can cause severe sickness, which may begin a few hours after treatment and last for a few days. It is usually possible to control it with anti sickness injections and tablets. If you still feel sick, tell your doctor or nurse because there are other anti sickness medicines you can try
- A sore mouth – about 2 to 3 days after each treatment you may have red, sore skin in your mouth and mouth ulcers. This gradually clears up within a couple of weeks
- Your urine may become pink or red for 1 or 2 days after treatment – this is due to the colour of one of the drugs and won't harm you
- Black or brown discoloration in the skin creases is particularly common in children
- Sensitivity to sunlight – don't sit out in the sun, and do make sure you cover up or use sun block on exposed skin
- Watery eyes occur in about 1 in 4 people with doxorubicin (25%) and may last for several days after the beginning of each treatment
- Women may stop having periods (amenorrhoea) but this may only be temporary
- Loss of fertility – you may not be able to get pregnant or father a child after treatment with this drug. It is important to talk to your doctor before starting treatment if you are considering having a child in the future

Occasional side effects

Between 1 and 10 in every 100 people have one or more of these.

- Inflammation around the drip site – if you notice any signs of redness, swelling or leaking at your drip site, tell your chemotherapy nurse immediately
- Reddening of the skin in areas where you have had radiotherapy in the past, and the skin may get dry and flaky and feel sore and hot – this goes away on its own but keep affected areas out of the sun
- Damage to heart muscle from doxorubicin, which is usually temporary but for a small number of people may be permanent – your doctor will check your heart before and after your treatment
- Diarrhoea – drink plenty of fluids and if the diarrhoea becomes severe or continues for more than 3 days tell your doctor or nurse because you could get dehydrated
- Constipation can be a problem with vinblastine, but this is usually well controlled with laxatives – tell your doctor or nurse if you are constipated for more than 3 days
- Taste changes – food may taste metallic
- Nails may become darker and white lines may appear on them
- Fever and chills
- Numbness or tingling in fingers and toes can cause difficulty with fiddly things such as doing up buttons – this starts within a few days or weeks and usually goes within a few months of finishing treatment
- Inflammation of the lungs occurs in about 1 in 10 patients treated with bleomycin (10%) but it is more common in people over 70 – you will have lung tests before and during treatment. Tell your doctor or nurse if you develop a dry cough or breathlessness, especially in cold weather



KEEP ALL MEDICINE OUT OF THE SIGHT AND REACH OF CHILDREN

- Dacarbazine can cause flu like symptoms for a week after treatment in about 1 in 10 people (10%) – you may have a high temperature (fever), chills, muscle and joint aching, or weakness.
- Sore eyes happen in some people, some people may have difficulty in focusing a few days after chemo. Usually clears up after a few days.

Important points to remember

The side effects above may be mild or more severe. A side effect may get better or worse through your course of treatment, or more side effects may develop as the course goes on. This depends on

- How many times you've had the drug before
- Your general health
- The amount of the drug you have (the dose)
- Other drugs you are having

Coping with side effects

Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse about all your side effects so that they can help you manage them. They can give you advice or reassure you. Your nurse will give you a contact number to ring if you have any questions or problems. If in doubt, call them.

Other medicines

Tell your doctor about any other medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbal supplements, and over the counter remedies – some drugs can react together.

Pregnancy and contraception

These drugs may have a harmful effect on a developing baby and it is not advisable to become pregnant or father a child if you are having this treatment. Talk about contraception with your doctor or nurse before treatment starts.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is not advisable during this treatment because the drug may come through in the breast milk.

Immunisations and chemotherapy

- You should not have immunisations with live vaccines while you are having chemotherapy or for at least 6 months afterwards. These include rubella, mumps, measles (usually given together as MMR), BCG, yellow fever and Zostavax (shingles vaccine).
- You can have other vaccines, but they may not give you as much protection as usual until your immune system has fully recovered from your chemotherapy.
- It is safe to have the flu vaccine.
- It is safe for you to be in contact with other people who've had live vaccines as injections.
- You might need to make sure that you aren't in contact with anyone who has had oral polio, cholera or typhoid vaccination recently.