



Bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) (Breast)

This leaflet is offered as a guide to you and your family. Bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) is a monoclonal antibody/targeted therapy. Bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) targets a protein called vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF). This is a protein that helps cancer cells develop a new blood supply. Bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) blocks the protein and stops the cancer from developing new blood vessels. This reduces the supply of oxygen and nutrients so the tumour shrinks or stops growing.

Your treatment

Your doctor or nurse clinician has prescribed for you a treatment which includes the monoclonal antibody bevacizumab (Avastin[®]). This treatment is often given in combination with chemotherapy.

Bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) is given into the vein (intravenously) through a fine tube (cannula) as an infusion over 90 minutes. Subsequent infusions may be given over 60 or 30 minutes depending on how well treatment has been tolerated.

You will have a routine blood test before the start of each cycle of treatment. Occasionally we may not be able to go ahead with your treatment until your blood counts are back to a safe level. If this happens, your treatment may be put back (deferred) a week.

This treatment can have serious or possibly life-threatening side effects. It is very important that you report side effects straight away. Don't delay, if you feel unwell, please ring The Christie Hotline on 0161 446 3658. The lines are open 24 hours a day.

Increased risk of serious infection

You are vulnerable to infection while you are having treatment. Minor infections can become life-threatening in a matter of hours if left untreated. Symptoms of infection include fever, shivering, sweats, sore throat, diarrhoea, discomfort when you pass urine, cough or breathlessness. We recommend that you use a digital thermometer so you can check your temperature. You can buy one from your local chemist.

If you feel unwell, you have symptoms of an infection or your temperature is 37.5°C or above or below 36°C contact The Christie Hotline straight away.

Possible side effects

Bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) can cause many different side effects. Some are more likely to occur than others. Everyone is different and not everyone gets all the side effects. Most side effects are usually temporary, but in some rare cases they can be life-threatening. It is important to tell your hospital doctor or nurse about any side effects so they can be monitored and, where possible, treated.

Common side-effects (more than 1 in 10)

- **High blood pressure**

You will need to have your blood pressure checked throughout your treatment as some patients experience a rise in their blood pressure measurements. Most patients don't experience any problems due to this but will be started on tablets to control their blood pressure. These medications can usually be stopped once bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) treatment has stopped. Doses of bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) may need to be missed until your blood pressure is under control.

- **Protein in the urine**

This can occur due to effects of bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) on the kidneys. It doesn't normally cause symptoms but requires careful monitoring. Before each dose of treatment you will have your urine tested for protein. If protein is identified you may need to have a 24-hour urine collection to assess how well your kidneys are working. Bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) may be stopped until the protein found in the urine has resolved.

- **Tingling & numbness in the fingers or toes**

This is due to the effect of the treatment on the nerves and is known as peripheral neuropathy. You may also notice that you have difficulty doing up buttons or similar tasks. Tell your doctor if you notice any numbness or tingling in your hands or feet. This usually improves a few months after treatment has finished although this may be permanent.

- **Diarrhoea**

If this becomes a problem while you are having treatment, contact The Christie Hotline for advice. **If you develop severe diarrhoea it is important to contact this hospital straightaway as this may be a sign of a serious infection. Don't delay!**

- **Nausea and vomiting (sickness)**

The severity of this varies from person to person. Anti-sickness medication may be given along with your treatment to prevent this. You will be given anti-sickness tablets to take at home. If you continue to feel or be sick, contact your GP or this hospital, because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased.

Uncommon side-effects (less than 1 in 10)

- **Slow wound healing**

Bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) can slow the healing of wounds. Your doctor will discuss this with you if you have a post-operative scar or if surgery is planned after a course of chemotherapy and bevacizumab (Avastin[®]).



- **Increased risk of bruising or bleeding**

Minor nose bleeds are commonly seen in patients receiving this treatment. However, if you develop unusual bruising or bleeding contact The Christie Hotline for advice immediately.

- **Bowel perforation/complications**

A small hole can sometimes develop in the wall of the bowel (perforation). You will be closely monitored when you come for treatment but if you develop any pain or abdominal swelling contact The Christie Hotline for advice immediately. Occasionally an abnormal opening (fistula) can develop between internal organs and the skin that are not normally connected.

- **Constipation**

Try to drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fibre. Report this to your hospital doctor who may prescribe a suitable laxative. Ask the staff for a copy of Eating: Help Yourself which has useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment.

- **Blood clots**

There is an increased risk of blood clots in patients receiving bevacizumab (Avastin[®]). This can cause a variety of symptoms depending on which blood vessel the clot is affecting. If you do develop a blood clot you'll need to have treatment to thin your blood and dissolve the clot.

- **Infusion-related allergic reaction**

Occasionally allergic reactions can occur whilst you are receiving the bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) infusion in hospital. This can result in symptoms of a rash, sickness, dizziness, wheeze or shortness of breath. Before receiving bevacizumab (Avastin[®]) all patients are given treatment to reduce the risk of a reaction occurring. If you develop an allergic reaction the infusion will be stopped and treatment will be given to help the reaction settle.

- **Change in voice (hoarseness)**

- **Lethargy**

Some treatment may make you feel tired and lacking in energy. It can be frustrating when you feel unable to cope with routine tasks. You may benefit from additional support during your treatment. Complementary therapies may be helpful. Ask your nurse or doctor for further information. If necessary, take time off work. Gentle exercise, such as walking, can be beneficial.

- **Sore mouth**

Your mouth may become sore or dry, or you may notice small mouth ulcers during this treatment. Drinking plenty of fluids and cleaning your teeth regularly and gently with a soft toothbrush can help to reduce the risk of this happening. We can prescribe a mouthwash for you to use during treatment. You can dilute this with water if your mouth is sore. Ask your doctor or nurse for further advice. There is also general mouth care information in the chemotherapy booklet. If you continue to have a sore mouth, please contact The Christie Hotline.

Rare side effects (less than 1 in 100)

- **Very high blood pressure**

If your blood pressure becomes very high it can cause symptoms such as headaches, sleepiness, sickness, confusion and fits. If you experience these symptoms you should attend the nearest **Accident and Emergency department** for assessment.

Serious and potentially life threatening side effects

In a small proportion of patients treatment can result in very severe side effects which may rarely result in death. The team caring for you will discuss the risk of these side effects with you.

Sex, contraception & fertility

Protecting your partner and contraception: We recommend that you or your partner use a condom during sexual intercourse while you are having the course of treatment. Treatment is dangerous to unborn babies and this will also protect you and your partner from any drugs that may be present in semen and in the vagina. If you suspect that you may be pregnant please tell your doctor immediately.

Fertility: This treatment may affect your ability to have children. Your doctor or nurse should have discussed this with you. If not, please ask them before you start treatment.

Late side effects

Some side effects may become evident only after a number of years. In reaching any decision with you about treatment, the potential benefit you receive from treatment will be weighed against the risks of serious long term side effects to the heart, lungs, kidneys and bone marrow. With some drugs there is also a small but definite risk of developing another cancer. If any of these problems specifically applies to you, the doctor will discuss these with you and note this on your consent form.

Contacts

If you have any general questions or concerns about your treatment, please ring the area where you are having treatment:

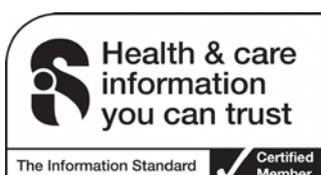
- Administration enquiries 0161 918 7606/7610
- Chemotherapy nurse: 0161 918 7171
- Clinical trials unit 0161 918 7663
- Breast care nurses 0161 446 3996

For advice ring The Christie Hotline on 0161 446 3658 (24 hours)

Your consultant is:

Your hospital number is:

Your key worker is:



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Details of the sources used are available, please contact Patient.Information@christie.nhs.uk