

## ABVD

The possible benefits of treatment vary; for some people this chemotherapy may reduce the risk of the cancer coming back, for others it may control the cancer and its symptoms. Your doctor will explain to you whether you will receive chemotherapy or another type of treatment, or a combination of both. Your doctor or nurse will be happy to answer any questions you have about your treatment. You will find it useful to refer to the booklet 'Chemotherapy, a guide' which gives general information on chemotherapy and side effects.

### Your treatment

Your doctor or nurse clinician has prescribed for you a course of treatment with doxorubicin, bleomycin, vinblastine and dacarbazine. The treatment is given as injection (bolus) and an infusion (drip) into your vein. The treatment consists of the following:

#### Day 1 and Day 15

- Doxorubicin by injection
- Bleomycin by injection
- Vinblastine by short infusion
- Dacarbazine by infusion over 30 minutes

You will have treatment on Day 1 and Day 15 of a 28 day cycle.  
You will have 2, 3 or 6 cycles.

You will have a routine blood test and medical review before the start of each cycle of treatment. This is so your team can monitor and manage any side effects as well as assess your response to 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 chemotherapy may be delayed a week.

As you have Hodgkin Lymphoma, if you need a blood or platelet transfusion, the blood transfusion laboratory will select 'irradiated' blood. This is to reduce the risk of a serious complication. We will give you a leaflet and alert card about this.

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.

### Possible side effects

Chemotherapy 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.



## Tumour lysis syndrome

This treatment may cause the rapid breakdown of lymphoma cells, which may lead to abnormalities in the blood. This problem is more likely if you have a lot of disease or if your kidneys do not work as well as they should do. Your doctor will tell you if you are at risk. You may be given a kidney-protective medicine called allopurinol for the first cycle of treatment, and your doctor may do additional blood tests to monitor this side effect. We sometimes admit patients for the first treatment to give intravenous fluids and kidney-protective medication and twice daily monitoring of blood tests for 48 hours.

## Common side effects (more than 1 in 10)

### • Lung function (Warning!)

Bleomycin may cause some changes to your lung tissue. **Report any cough or breathlessness to your doctor without delay.**

### • Flu-like symptoms

Bleomycin may cause flu-like symptoms such as fever, aches and pains and shivering about 4 to 5 hours after it is given. These symptoms should be temporary and should go within 12 to 24 hours. Paracetamol will help. If your symptoms persist or are particularly severe, tell your doctor on your next visit.

### • Nausea and vomiting (sickness)

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

### • Hair loss

Hair loss is usually total but this depends on the number of cycles of chemotherapy you have. The hair falls out gradually 10 to 14 days following your first course of treatment. The time scale varies from person to person. Please remember that this is a temporary side effect and your hair will grow back when your treatment is completed. Very rarely, hair loss can be permanent. If you would like an appointment with the wig service, this can be arranged for you by visiting the cancer information centre, or call **0161 446 8100**. Ask the staff for a copy of the 'Wig fitting service'.

The Maggie's centre runs a Talking Heads hair loss support workshop for anyone who is anticipating or experiencing hair loss (both men and women). These sessions cover the practicalities of hair loss as well as offering support with its emotional impact. Contact Maggie's on **0161 641 4848** or email [manchester@maggiescentres.org](mailto:manchester@maggiescentres.org) to arrange an appointment.

### • Lethargy

Some chemotherapy may make you feel tired and lacking in energy. It can be frustrating when you feel unable to cope with routine tasks. If you do feel tired, take rest and get help with household chores. If necessary, take time off work. Gentle exercise such as walking can be beneficial.

### • Skin and nails

Bleomycin can sometimes cause a rash, skin sensitivity and/or blistering to the hands and feet. Report this to your doctor if this happens. Dacarbazine can cause facial flushing especially in sunlight. Some chemotherapy can make your skin more sensitive to the sun than usual. Sit in the shade, avoid too much sun and use a sunblock cream.

Sometimes as a result of the chemotherapy, your skin may appear darker in colour or lightly tanned, especially around the joints. This is known as hyperpigmentation. Asian and African-Caribbean people may develop noticeable light patches on their skin. Your nails may also discolour or become brittle during treatment. The skin and nails will usually return to normal when treatment is finished.

- **Constipation and reduced appetite**

Vinblastine and some anti-sickness tablets can cause 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.

Dacarbazine and bleomycin can suppress your appetite. Ask the staff for a copy of 'Eating - help yourself' which has useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment.

- **Urine discolouration**

Doxorubicin because of its red colour may discolour your urine red or pink for 24 hours following treatment. This is perfectly normal and nothing to worry about.

- **Pain along the vein**

Dacarbazine can also cause pain along the vein during treatment. Tell your nurse if this happens and the infusion can be slowed down.

## **Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)**

### **Increased risk of serious infection**

You are vulnerable to infection while you are having chemotherapy. The risk of infection is higher in older people having ABVD. 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 pharmacy.

**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.**

- **Anaemia (low number of red blood cells)**

While having this treatment you may become anaemic. This may make you feel tired and breathless. Let your doctor or nurse know if these symptoms are a problem. You may need a blood transfusion.

- **Bruising or bleeding**

This treatment can reduce the production of platelets which help the blood clot. Let your doctor know if you have any unexplained bruising or bleeding, such as nosebleeds, bloodspots or rashes on the skin, and bleeding gums. You may need a platelet transfusion.

- **Tingling and numbness in the fingers or toes/muscle weakness**

This is common but is usually only mild and temporary. It can sometimes last for some time or become permanent. Sometimes you may also have difficulty controlling the muscles in your arms and legs or your balance. Please report these symptoms to your doctor on your next hospital visit.

- **Sore mouth and altered taste**

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. You may also develop a strange taste sometimes described as metallic or bitter. A strongly flavoured sweet or mint will help to disguise this. Normal taste will usually return after the treatment finishes.

## Rare side effects (less than 1 in 100)

- **Extravasation**

Extravasation is when chemotherapy leaks outside the vein. If you develop redness, soreness or pain at the injection site **at any time** please let us know straightaway.

## Serious and potentially life threatening side effects

In a small proportion of patients chemotherapy 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 and 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 chemotherapy. Chemotherapy is dangerous to unborn babies and this will also protect you and your partner from any chemotherapy 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 chemotherapy 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 an increased chance 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.

Higher doses of doxorubicin may cause changes in the muscle of the heart. This can affect how the heart works. The effect on the heart depends on the dose given. It is very unusual for the heart to be affected if you have standard doses. Tests to see how well your heart is working may sometimes be carried out before the chemotherapy is given.

## Contacts

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

Haematology day unit - **0161 446 3924**

Lymphoma clinical nurse specialists - **0161 446 8573**

Lymphoma secretaries -

**0161 446 3753** - Professor Radford/Dr Linton

**0161 446 8574** - Professor Illidge

**0161 446 3956** - Dr Smith

**0161 446 3332** - Professor Cowan

**0161 446 3302** - Dr Harris/Dr Chan

**0161 446 3869** - Dr Bloor

Palatine treatment ward - **0161 446 3960/3961**

General enquiries - **0161 446 3000**

Your consultant is: .....

Your hospital number is: .....

Your key worker is: .....

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The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **patient.information@christie.nhs.uk**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for  
urgent support and specialist advice  
**The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658**  
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week