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The chemotherapy drug bleomycin can cause lung damage in some people. This can be very serious and can sometimes cause life-threatening problems.

Understand your risk (chance) of lung problems from bleomycin

Lung damage from bleomycin does not happen often. The risk of lung problems starts during your bleomycin treatment and can continue for many years afterwards.

Things that may increase your risk are:

- being older than 40 years
- having other lung disease
- being a smoker
- having kidney problems.

Some research suggests that high doses of oxygen can also increase your risk of getting lung damage.

This can happen:

- in hospital, if you are given high levels of oxygen to breathe during an operation or while you are on the ward
- during scuba diving, when you breathe high levels of oxygen.

! Get help if you have any lung symptoms

Contact your doctor or nurse immediately if you have:

- a temperature of 38°C or higher
- trouble breathing
- shortness of breath
- wheezing
- coughing
- chest pain

If you can't contact your doctor or nurse, go to your nearest hospital emergency department for help.

Know what your doctors will do to reduce your risk

There is a maximum amount of bleomycin that a person can have over their lifetime.

- Your doctors will keep track of how much bleomycin you have.
- They will make sure you don't have more than this maximum lifetime dose.

Your doctors will check your breathing and lungs and may do an X-ray of your chest.

Lung function tests may be done to check how well your lungs are working.

- Your doctor may arrange a test before you start treatment.
- You may have more tests during and after treatment.

Learn what you can do to reduce your risk

Make sure that you let people know that you have had bleomycin in the past. This is important if you need any hospital treatment that may include having oxygen.

Things you should do include:

- wear a wristband, or carry a card in your wallet, to tell people that having oxygen could damage your lungs
- make sure you show these if you have surgery or go to a hospital emergency department
- if you need surgery, tell the anaesthetists that you have had bleomycin
- talk to your doctor or nurse if you plan to scuba dive or do any other activity that involves high levels of oxygen.



If you have any questions about bleomycin and lung problems, please ask your doctor or nurse.

Questions:

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Contact numbers:

Daytime:

Night/weekend:

Working together to lessen the impact of cancer

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