



# Doxorubicin

(*Adriamycin*<sup>®</sup>)

## What is Doxorubicin?

Doxorubicin is a chemotherapy drug used to treat a variety of cancers. It works by inhibiting formation of new DNA and RNA within the cancer cell, which leads to cancer cell death.

## How will I receive Doxorubicin?

Doxorubicin is a red-colored liquid that is given as an injection into your vein (IV).

## What are the common side effects?

Please see chapter 5, “Managing Symptoms at Home,” in the manual.

What You May Expect	What You Should Do
<p><b>Decreased blood counts</b> (lowered platelets, red and white blood cells) may occur. You may feel weak and tired. You may develop infections more easily and may bruise more easily.</p> <p>Your health care providers will test your blood frequently to monitor your blood counts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Report any signs of infection, fever, and unusual bleeding or bruising.</li></ul>
<p><b>Nausea and vomiting</b> may occur, usually within 24 to 48 hours after treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You will be given medications to help you better tolerate these side effects.</li></ul>

Doxorubicin may cause <b>burning at the injection site</b> if it leaks under the skin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell your nurse or doctor immediately if you have any burning, pain, redness or swelling while the medication is being infused.</li></ul>
<b>Hair loss, thinning or a change in the texture</b> of your hair may occur within a few days to weeks of treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your hair will grow once your Doxorubicin treatment is finished.</li><li>• Use a gentle baby shampoo and soft brush. Avoid hair spray, bleaches or perms.</li></ul>
<b>Mouth ulcers</b> may occur within 5 to 10 days of treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good mouth care is very important.</li><li>• It may help to rinse your mouth with salt water.</li><li>• Avoid commercial mouthwashes that contain alcohol, as this can be very painful and irritating to your mouth.</li></ul>
<b>Darkening or discoloration of the urine</b> may occur for 1 to 2 days after the drug is given. The urine may appear pink, orange, or red colored.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This is a temporary side effect that will resolve once your Doxorubicin treatment is complete.</li></ul>

**These are the most common side effects. Others may occur. Please report any problems to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.**

**Call and Seek Help Immediately If You Have:**

- Signs of an infection such as fever, chills, cough, pain or burning when you urinate.
- Signs of uncontrolled bleeding such as black tarry stools, blood in the urine, or severe bruising.

**Contact Your Nurse or Doctor If You Have:**

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Signs of heart problems such as trouble breathing, swelling of your legs or ankles, uneven or fast heartbeat, or chest pain.
- Skin rash, especially in an area where you previously had radiation therapy.

## Questions?

Call \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

## Special Instructions

Inform your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Use contraception when receiving chemotherapy.

Be sure to inform your health care provider of any other medications you are currently taking. Please inform your doctor if you have received this medication previously. Check with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist before starting any new medications.

Talk to your doctor or nurse about any additional questions.

## Drug-Drug Interactions

None known at this time.

## Drug-Food Interactions

None known at this time.

For more complete information, please request an additional teaching sheet from the National Library of Medicine at [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html), your nurse, pharmacist, or visit the Resource Center.

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*A member of the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, a collaboration of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, the University of Washington and Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center*