Using Bleomycin® to Treat your Vascular Malformation

Information for patients and families

Read this booklet to learn:

• what a vascular malformation is
• how Bleomycin® can help
• how to prepare
• what to expect
• who to call if you have any questions

What is a vascular malformation?

A vascular malformation is an abnormal group of blood vessels that can keep growing and changing. There are 2 types of vascular malformations:

• slow blood flow
  These include only your veins or lymph vessels.
• high blood flow
  These may include your arteries and veins joined together.

If they start to affect your daily life, they can be treated.
What is Bleomycin®?
Bleomycin is an antibiotic medicine that destroys cells. This type of medicine is also called a cytotoxic. It’s used to treat many types of vascular malformations.

Injecting Bleomycin® into your vascular malformation may reduce its size and growth by destroying the blood vessel walls.

Are there any risks to this procedure?
In the areas where you are injected, you may:

- develop an ulcer (an open wound on the surface of your skin)
- have a patch of skin that becomes darker for a short time

You may also have these side effects for a short time:

- dry mouth
- a metallic taste
- nausea
- vomiting
- have mild temporary hair loss

How do I prepare?

Pre-admission appointment
You have a pre-admission appointment about 1 or 2 weeks before your procedure. During this appointment:

- you meet with your neuroradiologist
  This is an x-ray doctor who will do the procedure to treat your vascular malformation. They will give you information about the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form. This is a form that says you agree to have the procedure.
• you meet with your anesthetist
  This is a doctor who will give you medicine so you will be asleep during the procedure

• tell them if you are taking any blood thinning medicine (like Coumadin or Heparin) or have diabetes

Ask them any questions you may have during this appointment.

Don’t eat or drink after midnight before your procedure. You can take your regular medicine with sips of water.

The day of your procedure
Go to the Day Surgery Unit on the 4th floor of Toronto Western Hospital. A porter will take you to the neuroradiology department on the 3rd floor where you will have your procedure.

What can I expect?

We put an intravenous (IV) in your arm so we can give you fluids and medicines during the procedure.

We give you a **general anesthetic** through your IV so you are fully asleep during the procedure.

We put a tube into your throat to give you oxygen. We also put in a urine catheter (tube) to help you urinate.

The anesthetist closely watches your heart rate, blood pressure and breathing during the procedure.

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Using x-rays, the neuroradiologist guides a needle into your vascular malformation. When it’s in the right place, they inject the Bleomycin®. They may do this more than once, if necessary. The balloon is inflated and deflated several times.

After you are injected, the neuroradiologist will press on the area for about 10 minutes.

**When can I go home?**

You can usually go home the same day as your procedure. Ask your neuroradiologist how much you can do when you get home and what medicines to take. You must have a friend or family member help take you home.

**At home:**

- Expect the area of your vascular malformation to be swollen for about 1 or 2 weeks.
- You may have mouth sores, darkening of your skin or temporary hair loss.

**Go to your nearest hospital emergency department if:**

- your swelling and pain becomes worse
- you have flu-like symptoms for more than 48 hours
- you are short of breath
- you have an allergic reaction, such as a rash
When will I see my doctor again?

The nurse coordinator will make an appointment for you to see your neuroradiologist for a follow-up about 4 weeks after your procedure.

Who can I call if I have any questions?

If you have any other questions or need help, please call the Clinical Nurse Coordinator at:
☎ 416 603 5800, extension 2966

The Clinical Nurse Coordinator is available from Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

If you need help outside those times, go to your nearest emergency department.