



Doxorubicin (Adriamycin[®], “Adria”)

At the Clinical Center referred to as Adriamycin[®] (a-dree-ah-MYE-sin).

How Given: Intravenously (by vein)

Drug Action: Adriamycin[®] prevents cancer cells from growing by binding together or breaking apart the building blocks that form DNA. DNA is the genetic material in cells used to make new cells.

Side Effects:

1. Bone marrow effects can include a temporary decrease in white blood cells, platelets, and red blood cells. These usually occur 7 to 14 days after treatment.
2. Nausea and vomiting can occur 1 to 3 hours after treatment and last up to 24 hours.
3. Lip, mouth, and throat sores can begin within 7 days after treatment.
4. Temporary hair thinning or hair loss can occur.
5. Stomach cramping and diarrhea can occur.
6. Adriamycin[®] can damage your heart muscle. Tests will be done to monitor this effect.
7. Darkening of nail beds and skin creases can occur.
8. Radiation therapy, when given before and after Adriamycin[®], can cause severe reddening of the skin.

Special Instructions:

1. Tell your nurse immediately if the drug stings or burns during treatment. If the drug leaks out of the vein it can damage tissue. Prompt treatment is essential in order to minimize damage.

2. Adriamycin® is red and can cause your urine to be pink or red for up to 2 days after treatment.
3. Take anti-nausea medication on a schedule as directed even if you are not having nausea.
4. Protect skin from sun exposure. Wear protective clothing and use a sunscreen with an SPF rating of 15 or more when in the sun.
5. Do not take aspirin or aspirin-containing products unless prescribed by your NIH doctor.
6. Call your NIH doctor or nurse if you
 - have any shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or swelling of hands or ankles
 - have pain, discomfort, or redness at the injection site following treatment
 - are unable to drink for more than 1 day or eat for more than 2 days after treatment
 - have a temperature of 101.0 °F (38.3 °C) at any time, or have a temperature of at least 100.4 °F (38.0 °C) that lasts for 1 hour or occurs two times in a 24-hour period
 - have any unusual bleeding or bruising
 - have diarrhea for more than 2 days
 - have skin changes (redness or blistering) in the area treated with radiation



This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Living with Cancer Chemotherapy Series
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