PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Doxorubicin (Conventional

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Adriamycin

Warning

- This drug may cause severe heart problems like heart failure. This can happen during treatment or years after the last dose. Sometimes, this may not go away or may be deadly. The chance may be higher if your child has ever had heart problems or chest area radiation. The chance may also be higher if your child has ever used this drug, a drug like this one, or other drugs that may cause heart problems. Ask the doctor if you are not sure if any of your child's drugs may cause heart problems.
- The chance of heart problems depends on the dose

of this drug and your child's health problem. The chance of heart problems later in life is also higher. Heart problems may happen even without any risk factors. Call the doctor right away if your child has a cough; chest pain; fast, slow, or abnormal heartbeat; swelling in the arms or legs; shortness of breath; sudden weight gain; or feeling very tired or weak.

- Your child will need to get heart function tests while taking this drug. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may lower the ability of the bone marrow to make blood cells that the body needs. This can lead to a blood transfusion. Severe and sometimes deadly bleeding problems or infections can also happen. Tell the doctor right away if your child has signs of infection like fever, chills, or sore throat; any bruising or bleeding; or if your child feels very tired or weak.
- The risk of a certain bone marrow problem and second cancer (type of leukemia) may be raised after treatment with this drug. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause tissue damage if the drug leaks from the vein. Tell your child's nurse if your child has any redness, burning, pain, swelling, blisters, skin sores, or leaking of fluid where the drug is going into your child's body.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat cancer.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child has any of these health problems: Anemia, heart problems, liver disease, a low platelet count, or a low white blood cell count.
- If your child has had a recent heart attack.
- If your child has had daunorubicin, doxorubicin, epirubicin, idarubicin, or mitoxantrone before, talk with your child's doctor.
- If your child takes any drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) that must not be taken with this drug, like certain drugs that are used for HIV, infections, seizures, and others. There are many drugs that must not be taken with this drug.

If your child is pregnant:

- Do not give this drug to your child if she is in the first trimester of pregnancy.

If your child is breast-feeding a baby:

- Be sure your child does not breast-feed a baby while taking this drug. Your child may also need to avoid breast-feeding a baby for some time after the last dose. Talk with your child's doctor to see if your child needs to avoid breast-feeding a baby after the last dose.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe to give this drug with all of your child's other drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's

doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.

- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- Your child may have more chance of getting infections. Have your child wash hands often. Avoid crowds and people with infections, colds, or flu.
- Your child may bleed more easily. Make sure your child is careful and avoids injury. Be sure your child has a soft toothbrush.
- If your child has an upset stomach or diarrhea, is throwing up, or decreased appetite, talk with the doctor. There may be ways to lower these side effects.
- If side effects like upset stomach or throwing up, diarrhea, or mouth sores keep your child from eating or drinking like normal, call your child's doctor right away.
- Use care to keep body fluids from coming in contact with family members or caregivers. Wash soiled clothing right away and use gloves when touching body fluids for at least 5 days after each treatment.
- Talk with the doctor before your child gets any vaccines. Use of some vaccines with this drug may either raise the chance of very bad infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- If your child has ever had or will be having radiation

treatment, talk with the doctor. Worse side effects from radiation treatment have happened with this drug.

- If the patient is a child, use this drug with care. The risk of some side effects may be higher in children.
- This drug may affect sperm. This may affect being able to father a child later in life. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause fertility problems. This may affect being able to have children later in life. Talk with the doctor.
- Menstrual periods may stop during treatment with this drug. This may not go back to normal. People treated with this drug may go through menopause at a younger age than normal. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- If your child is of childbearing age, a pregnancy test will need to be done before starting this drug to make sure your child is not pregnant.

If your child is or may be sexually active:

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if your child takes it during pregnancy.
- If your child or your child's partner may become pregnant, birth control must be used while taking this drug and for some time after the last dose. Ask the

doctor how long birth control must be used. If your child or your child's partner gets pregnant, call the doctor right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child's doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Signs of bleeding like throwing up or coughing up blood; vomit that looks like coffee grounds; blood in the urine; black, red, or tarry stools; bleeding from the gums; abnormal vaginal bleeding; bruises without a cause or

that get bigger; or bleeding you cannot stop.

- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Patients with cancer who take this drug may be at greater risk of getting a severe health problem called tumor lysis syndrome (TLS). This may lead to death. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has a fast or abnormal heartbeat; any passing out; trouble passing urine; muscle weakness or cramps; upset stomach, throwing up, diarrhea, or not able to eat; or feels sluggish.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Hair loss.
- Diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Change in nails.
- Color of urine is orange or red for 1 to 2 days after getting this drug.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you

have questions about side effects, call your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- Call your child's doctor to find out what to do.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your child's doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the

reach of children and pets.

- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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