

Bleomycin

Bleomycin treatment for childhood cancer

Background

Bleomycin can sometimes cause damage to the lungs leading to inflammation (interstitial pneumonitis) and scarring (fibrosis) which can cause breathing difficulties. These problems can be made worse by inhaling cigarette smoke, toxic fumes, or high concentrations of oxygen such as during an anaesthetic. They can also be worsened by lung infections. As the lungs are vital organs supplying oxygen to the body, it is important for you to find out what you can do to keep them healthy and precautions you may need to follow.

Who is at risk?

You are at risk of developing lung problems if you had a high cumulative dose of bleomycin (400U/m² or more) especially in addition to any of the following:

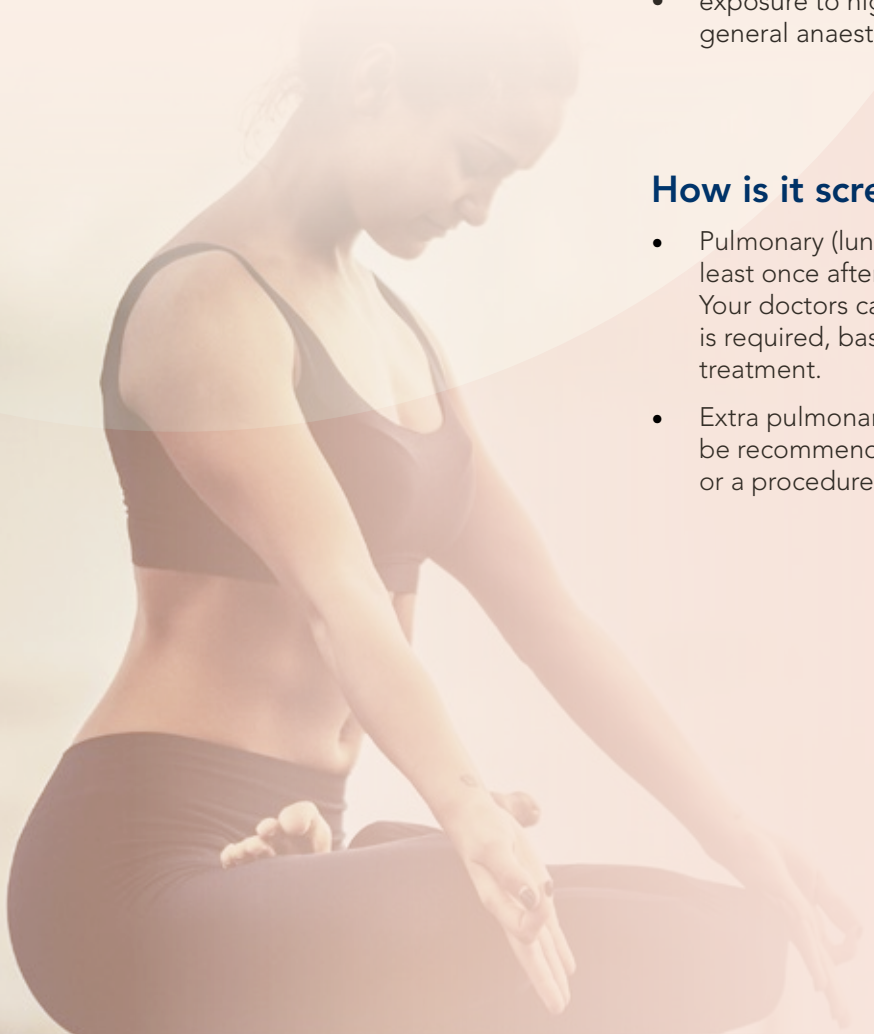
- radiotherapy to the lungs, chest or spine
- total body irradiation (TBI)
- other drugs that can cause damage to the lungs (see CCLG factsheet on 'The health of your lungs after childhood cancer treatment')
- smoking
- exposure to high oxygen levels over several hours (eg. general anaesthetic or scuba diving)

How is it screened for?

- Pulmonary (lung) function tests and a chest x-ray at least once after completion of all cancer treatment. Your doctors can decide with you if further testing is required, based on the results and your previous treatment.
- Extra pulmonary function tests and a chest x-ray may be recommended if you are scheduled to have surgery or a procedure that needs a general anaesthetic.

Published in conjunction with Aftercure: A guide for teenage and young adult survivors of childhood cancer

www.aftercure.org



What can I do?

- **Inform your doctor** that you have received bleomycin in the past, before any treatment or operation that may require an anaesthetic and oxygen.
- **Avoid** breathing high concentration of oxygen for long periods of time whenever possible.
- **Avoid smoking** (including passive smoking).
- Take **regular exercise** and eat a **healthy diet**.
- **Avoid scuba diving** until you have received further advice and assessment by a medical referee approved by the UK Sport Diving Medical Committee (UKSDMC).
- Consider **pneumococcal and yearly influenza vaccinations**, especially if you have evidence of lung problems.
- Consider wearing **medical alert identification**.
- **Follow safety regulations** in your work place and avoid breathing toxic fumes.

Where can I find more information?

The British Sub-Aqua Club has further information about scuba diving
www.bsac.com

www.aftercure.org

The full range of factsheets for childhood and teenage cancer survivors are available on the CCLG and Aftercure website in conjunction with CCLG's booklet entitled 'Aftercure: A guide for teenage and young adult survivors of childhood cancer'.



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Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group is a leading children's cancer charity and the UK and Ireland's professional association for those involved in the treatment and care of children with cancer. Each week in the UK and Ireland, more than 30 children are diagnosed. Two out of ten children will not survive their disease.

We bring together childhood cancer professionals to ensure all children receive the best possible treatment and care. We fund and support research into childhood cancers, and we help young patients and their families with our expert, high quality and award-winning information resources.

If you have any comments on this factsheet, please contact us.

CCLG publications on a variety of topics related to children's cancer are available to order or download free of charge from our website.