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## bevacizumab

### Trade/other name(s)

Avastin

**Pronunciation:** bev-uh-**sih**-zuh-mab

### Why would this drug be used?

This drug is used to treat colorectal, breast, kidney, and non-small cell lung cancers, and certain brain tumors. It may also be used to treat other cancers.

### How does this drug work?

Bevacizumab is a type of targeted therapy known as a monoclonal antibody. A monoclonal antibody is a man-made version of an immune system protein that fits like a lock and key with a specific protein in the body.

Bevacizumab attaches to a protein called vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF). It is thought that by doing this, the drug stops tumors from being able to create new blood vessels. This limits their supply of nutrients, which in turn may slow or stop their growth. For this reason, bevacizumab is sometimes referred to as an anti-angiogenic drug. Another theory is that it may work by making tumor blood vessels (which are usually leaky) more stable, allowing chemotherapy to get into cancer cells more effectively.

### Before taking this medicine

#### Tell your doctor:

- If you are allergic to any medicines.
- If you have ever had heart disease, stroke, or blood clots in the legs or lungs. This drug may raise your risk of stroke, heart attack, or other heart or blood vessel problems (see "Precautions" below).
- If you have ever had a transient ischemic attack or TIA (symptoms similar to stroke, with trouble moving or speaking, which go away within a few hours). This drug may raise your risk of TIA and similar brain problems, including bleeding in the brain.
- If you have ever coughed up blood. This drug may raise your risk of bleeding in the lung.

- If you have ever had congestive heart failure. This drug may raise your risk of heart failure, especially if given with certain chemotherapy drugs (see "Precautions" below).
- If you ever had high blood pressure. This drug may raise your risk of developing uncontrolled high blood pressure (see "Precautions" below).
- If you have ever had any other medical conditions such as kidney disease, liver disease (including hepatitis), diabetes, gout, or infections. These conditions may require that your medicine dose, regimen, or timing be changed.
- If you have recently had or are planning to have any type of surgery. This drug may interfere with wound healing (see "Precautions" below).
- If you are pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or if there is any chance of pregnancy. There may be an increased risk of birth defects if a woman takes this drug during pregnancy. It is important to check with your doctor about what kinds of birth control can be used with this medicine.
- If you are breast-feeding. It is not known whether this drug passes into breast milk. If it does, it may affect the baby. Breast-feeding should be stopped during treatment and for several months afterward.
- If you think you might want to have children in the future. This drug may reduce fertility. Talk with your doctor about the possible risk with this drug and the options that may preserve your ability to have children.
- About any other prescription or over-the-counter medicines you are taking, including vitamins and herbs.

### **Interactions with other drugs**

If used along with chemotherapy drugs known as anthracyclines, such as doxorubicin (Adriamycin) or epirubicin (Ellence), this drug may increase the risk of congestive heart failure.

Bevacizumab may cause irinotecan (Camptosar) to stay in the body longer, and may raise your risk of severe diarrhea.

Bevacizumab given with carboplatin (Paraplatin) and paclitaxel (Taxol) may cause less paclitaxel to stay in the body. This may reduce the effectiveness of paclitaxel.

No other serious interactions with other drugs are known at this time. But this does not necessarily mean that none exist. Check with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about your other medicines, herbs, and supplements, and whether alcohol can cause problems with this medicine.

### **Interactions with foods**

No serious interactions with food are known at this time. Check with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about whether some foods may be a problem.

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***Tell all the doctors, dentists, nurses, and pharmacists you visit that you are taking this drug.***

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### **How is this drug taken or given?**

Bevacizumab is given as an infusion into a vein. It is usually given once every 2 weeks for colorectal, kidney, and breast cancers and for brain tumors, and once every 3 weeks for lung cancer. The first treatment is usually given over 90 minutes. If you have no major problems, the next one may be given over 60 minutes. If there are no problems with this, later treatments may be given over 30 minutes. The dose depends on your weight and what the drug is being used for.

### **Precautions**

This drug can cause infusion reactions in some people when the drug is given, especially during and right after the first treatment. Symptoms can include high blood pressure, headaches, chest pain, wheezing, chills, and sweating. Tell your doctor or nurse right away if you notice any of these symptoms during or after being given the drug.

This drug can affect your body's ability to heal wounds. Bevacizumab should not be used within 28 days (before or after) surgery.

This drug can cause bleeding, especially coughing up blood. This has been seen more often in patients with lung cancer, especially a type known as squamous non-small cell lung cancer. Call your doctor right away if you cough up blood.

Nosebleeds are also more likely, and in rare cases have been serious. Bleeding in the brain has also been reported. Be sure your doctor is aware if you take any medicines that may affect your body's ability to stop bleeding, such as aspirin or aspirin-containing medicines, warfarin (Coumadin), or vitamin E. Tell your doctor right away if you have unusual bruising, nosebleeds, unexpected vaginal bleeding, bleeding gums when you brush your teeth, or black, tarry stools.

This drug may raise your risk of problems due to blood clots, including heart attacks, strokes, and blood clots in the legs or lungs. Tell your doctor right away if you have chest pain, shortness of breath, sudden sweating, lightheadedness, vision changes, trouble speaking or moving, or swelling, pain, redness, or warmth in an arm or leg.

This drug may cause congestive heart failure, especially in people who have received radiation to the chest or chemotherapy drugs called anthracyclines, such as doxorubicin (Adriamycin) or epirubicin (Ellence). Tell your doctor or nurse right away if you have trouble breathing (shortness of breath), a new cough, weight gain, or swelling around your eyes, in your hands or feet, or in your abdomen.

In rare cases, this drug can cause a hole (perforation) or an abscess in the intestines. It is important to tell your doctor or nurse right away if you develop severe stomach (abdominal) pain, and have nausea, constipation, or any other symptom with it.

This drug may cause high blood pressure or make existing high blood pressure worse. If you are taking a drug for high blood pressure, talk to

your doctor about this. Your blood pressure will be checked before and between treatments, and you may need medicine to help control it if it goes up. If you develop severe high blood pressure, it may not go back to normal after you stop bevacizumab. Tell your doctor right away if notice any possible symptoms of high blood pressure, including a severe headache, chest pain, or feeling dizzy or light-headed.

Bevacizumab may affect your kidneys, which can cause protein in the urine (proteinuria). Your urine will be checked for this. If the amount of protein is high, your doctor may stop your treatment until your kidneys are working better and less protein is found in your urine. You will be watched closely for this.

Your doctor will likely test your blood throughout your treatment, looking for possible effects of the drug on blood counts (described below) or on other body organs. Based on the test results, you may be given medicines to help treat any effects. Your doctor may also need to reduce or delay your next dose of this drug, or even stop it altogether.

This drug may lower your white blood cell count. This can increase your chance of getting an infection. Be sure to let your doctor or nurse know right away if you have any signs of infection, such as fever, chills, pain when passing urine, new onset of cough, or bringing up sputum. Your doctor will likely prescribe medicines for you to take during and after treatment to help prevent certain infections.

In rare cases, this drug may cause a condition of the nerves known as reversible posterior leukoencephalopathy syndrome (RPLS). This may or may not be related to high blood pressure. Symptoms may include feeling sleepy or confused, headaches, vision problems (including blindness), and seizures. Call your doctor right away if you have any of these symptoms.

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## Possible side effects

### Common

- high blood pressure\*
- headache
- mouth sores
- diarrhea
- loss of appetite
- feeling tired
- feeling weak

### Less common

- blood clots\*
- nosebleed\*
- low white blood cell count\*
- protein in the urine\*
- shortness of breath
- constipation
- abdominal pain
- nausea/vomiting

### Rare

- stroke or heart attack\*
- hole in the intestines (bowel perforation)\*
- slow healing of a wound or surgical incision (or re-opening of one that is healing)\*
- bleeding in the lungs, brain, or in other parts of the body\*
- kidney damage, which may not improve after treatment is stopped\*
- congestive heart failure with shortness of breath and swelling, especially feet and legs\*
- nervous system problems, with sleepiness, confusion, trouble with vision, or seizures\*
- rash, which may be severe
- infusion reaction, with headache, chest pain, wheezing, sweating, or chills\*

\*See "Precautions" section for more detailed information.

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There are other side effects not listed above that can also occur in some patients. **Tell your doctor or nurse if you develop these or any other problems.**

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### **FDA approval**

Yes - first approved in 2004

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**Disclaimer:** This information does not cover all possible uses, actions, precautions, side effects, or interactions. It is not intended as medical advice, and should not be relied upon as a substitute for talking with your doctor, who is familiar with your medical needs.

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