

RITUXIMAB

ri-tux-ih-mab

What does it do?

Rituximab is used to treat some types of cancer such as lymphoma and leukaemia. It is also sometimes used for rheumatoid arthritis.

How is it given?

Rituximab is given as an infusion into a vein.

Rituximab can cause a reaction while it is being infused. This usually happens within 30 minutes to 2 hours after starting the first infusion. You may have trouble breathing, or experience fever, chills, flushing, skin rash, itching, dizziness or headache. Tell your health professional immediately if any of these symptoms occur. This reaction is usually mild and can be controlled by giving *rituximab* more slowly. You will also be given medicines shortly before the infusion to help control this reaction. Once the symptoms have gone away the speed of the infusion can usually be increased again.

What if you forget a dose?

Rituximab will be given to you by a health professional. If you are unable to attend an appointment, contact your health professional as soon as possible.

Can you take other medicines?

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products or recreational drugs.

What side effects might you notice?

Side Effects	Recommended action
Swollen lips, tongue, throat or face Chest pain, fast or irregular heartbeat Reduced number of blood cells that fight infections or help your blood to clot - symptoms include: fever, chills, sore throat or generally feeling unwell, or easy or unusual bruising or bleeding	Tell your doctor immediately
Loss of co-ordination, muscle weakness, forgetfulness, or vision changes Tingling or numbness, joint, muscle or bone aches and pains	Tell your doctor
Swollen feet or legs Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain	Tell your doctor if troublesome

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Other information:

- Tell your doctor if you have heart, blood pressure or lung problems.
- Tell your doctor if you have a long-term infection e.g. tuberculosis, HIV or hepatitis B or C.
- Reliable contraception should be used while being treated with *rituximab*, and for up to 12 months after stopping. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.
- You have an increased risk of getting an infection while taking *rituximab*. Discuss with your doctor.
- *Rituximab* affects your immune system. Before you start and while you are using it, check with your doctor what vaccines you might need. You should not have a live vaccine while using it.
- It is important to tell anyone who gives you medical or dental treatment that you are taking *rituximab*.