

Warning

This fact sheet aims to let you know the side effects most commonly seen following the administration of your treatment. Please note that when you take any medication, there is a possibility that it causes rare side effects and it is difficult to predict which patients will be affected.

General information for patient Rituximab maintenance

Date: May 2012

Revisions: May 2016

Medication	Administration
Rituximab	Intravenous infusion over a few hours
<i>Treatment repeated every ____ months for 2 years</i>	

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General information associated with your treatment

- › Rituximab is a monoclonal antibody that is used in combination with your chemotherapy treatment and is continued after its end to treat certain types of cancer.
- › A **blood test** will be done prior to every treatment cycle. Depending on its results and side effects of the previous treatment, the treatment might be delayed.
- › You may experience **fatigue** during your treatments. This is usually only temporary and may be related to different reasons (medication, stress, the disease). Maintain a good level of activity but rest when you feel the need to.
- › Consumption of **alcohol** (in small quantities) is permitted and will not affect the efficacy of treatments.
- › The effects of rituximab on the embryo are unknown. It is therefore highly recommended to use an effective contraceptive method. Breast feeding is contra-indicated during the entire duration of the treatment.
- › You can have an **active sexual** life during your treatments. However, a decrease in your sexual drive may occur during this period. This may also be influenced by various factors (fatigue, stress, etc.).
- › Consult your doctor or pharmacist before you take other medications (even over the counter medications available without a prescription) or natural products. These may provoke an interaction with your treatment and diminish its efficacy or increase side effects.
- › Follow the instructions given by your cancer center about the right way to handle and dispose of body fluids (for example urine, stools) in order to protect the environment and your relatives.
- › Be sure to always have at hand the complete list of your medications, dietary supplements, vitamins and other **natural health products**. Give it to you doctor and your pharmacist. It is important to make them aware of any change.

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Adverse effects and management

Adverse effects	Management
Rarely, nausea , usually light, may occur mainly on the same day and the day following your treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Before your treatment, medication to prevent nausea may be prescribed. At home, you may also have to take medication for 1 or 2 days or more, as needed.› Communicate with your doctor or pharmacist if your medication does not relieve your nausea.
There is no hair loss with this treatment.	
A decrease in the white blood cells may occur following treatment. You may be at higher risk to contract infections during this period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Wash your hands often.› During this period, avoid coming into contact with people who have contagious diseases.› Quickly contact a member of your healthcare team if you notice any signs of infection (fever, chills, cough, sore throat, pain while urinating...)› Consult your doctor or go immediately to the Emergency Room if you have a fever 38,3 °C (101°F) once or 38 °C (100.4 °F) twice an hour apart.› In case of fever, do not take acetaminophen (ex.: Tylenol®, Atasol®) and anti-inflammatory medication (ex.: Motrin®, Advil®).

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You may experience infusion-related reactions with rituximab , usually within 30 minutes to 2 hours of the start of the infusion. The most common reactions are fever and chills but hives, itching, hot flashes, difficulty breathing, headache, dizziness, nausea, swelling of tongue may also happen. These symptoms, usually mild to moderate, are more frequent during the first infusion and less common with subsequent infusions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Medication to prevent allergic reactions will be prescribed prior to treatment.› Notify the nurse if these symptoms occur during the administration of the drug. Medication can be given to alleviate these symptoms.
Rarely, you may experience pain or abdominal cramps . This may happen mainly in the first weeks of your treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Notify a member of your healthcare team as soon as possible and consult your doctor.

Special consideration

If you are taking **high blood** pressure medication, you should stop taking them at least 12 hours prior to the administration of rituximab. Your pharmacist or your doctor will advise you on how to take them.

Pharmacist: _____

Phone: _____

From ____ h to ____ h (Monday to Friday)