

**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.

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## **General Information for Patients**

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### **Weekly Rituximab**

**Date:** September 2003

**Revisions:** May 2016

<b>MEDICATION</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>
Rituximab	Intravenous infusion over a few hours once a week
<b><i>Treatment repeated once a week for 4 doses</i></b>	

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## General Information associated with your treatment

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- ❑ Rituximab is used to prevent the multiplication of abnormal cells and destroy them.
- ❑ A **blood test** will be done prior to every treatment cycle. Depending on its results and side effects of the previous treatment, the dose of the medication might be adjusted or 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 safety of Rituximab during pregnancy has not been established. Individuals of childbearing potential should use effective contraceptive methods during treatment and for up to 12 months following rituximab therapy. Breast-feeding is contra-indicated during chemotherapy.
- ❑ 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 different 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.
- ❑ 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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## Side Effects and Management

<b>SIDE EFFECTS</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT</b>
<p><b>Nausea</b>, usually light, may occur mainly on the same day and the day following your treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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.</li><li>• Communicate with your doctor or pharmacist if your medication does not relieve your nausea.</li></ul>
<p>There is <b>no hair loss</b> with this treatment.</p>	
<p>A decrease in the white blood cells is unlikely but could occur following your treatment. You may be at higher risk to contact infections during this period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wash your hands often.</li><li>• During this period, avoid coming into contact with people who have contagious diseases.</li><li>• Quickly contact a member of your healthcare team if you notice any signs of infection (fever, chills, cough, sore throat, pain while urinating...)</li><li>• Consult your doctor or go immediately to the Emergency Room if you have a fever 38,3 oC (101oF) once or 38 oC (100.4 oF) twice an hour apart.</li><li>• In case of fever, do not take acetaminophen (ex.: Tylenol®, Atasol®) and anti-inflammatory medication (ex.: Motrin®, Advil®).</li></ul>

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<b>SIDE EFFECTS</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT</b>
<p>You may experience infusion-related reactions with <b>rituximab</b>, 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</p> <p>may also happen. These symptoms, usually mild to moderate, are more frequent during the first infusion and less common with subsequent infusions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medication to prevent allergic reactions will be prescribed prior to treatment.</li><li>• Notify the nurse if these symptoms occur during the administration of the drug. Medication can be given to alleviate these symptoms.</li></ul>
<p>Rarely, you may experience <b>pain or abdominal cramps</b>. This may happen mainly in the first weeks of your treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Notify a member of your healthcare team as soon as possible and consult your doctor.</li></ul>

**Special Consideration**

- ❑ If you are taking high **blood pressure medication**, you should stop taking them at least 12 hours prior 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)**