

Rituximab (Rituxan[®])

Rituximab is a monoclonal antibody that is used to treat a certain type of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, rheumatoid arthritis and other diseases.

How Is It Given?

- clear liquid by IV (intravenous)

What Side Effects May Occur?

This is a partial list of the side effects you may have with this medicine. You may have some, all or none of those listed, or you may have other side effects not listed. Most side effects last only a short time.

Common:

- reaction, most often with the first dose (fever, chills, swelling of the tongue, shortness of breath)
- headache
- nausea (upset stomach)
- itchy skin or rash
- fatigue
- cough
- cold symptoms (runny nose, throat irritation, sinus infection)

Less common:

- nausea (upset stomach)
- lowered white blood cell, red blood cell and platelet counts (rare)
- dizziness

- abdominal (belly) pain
- chest pain (after the treatment)
- rare chance of infection in your brain if you have lupus (systemic lupus erythematosus)

Special Notes

- You may receive medicines before each infusion to help reduce any side effects.
- The first infusion will be the longest. It can take up to 6 hours. If you have no problems, the rest of the infusions will be shorter.
- Rituximab can cause a drop in your blood pressure for a short time. If you are taking high blood pressure medicine, you may be asked to stop it the day of your treatments. Both medicines taken together could cause your blood pressure to become too low.
- Tell your nurse if you have shortness of breath, fever, chills, muscle stiffness, or swollen lips or tongue during the treatment.
- Tell your doctor if you have a history of angina (chest pain) or have had a heart attack. Rituximab may cause chest pain or irregular heartbeats.
- Tell your doctor if you had the hepatitis B virus or if you are a carrier. Rituximab may cause you to become sick again with the hepatitis B virus.
- Rituximab may increase your chances for getting an infection. Tell your doctor right away if you have a fever, chills, cough that won't stop, or flu-like symptoms.

- You may have changes in your menstrual cycle or sperm count. Discuss birth control measures with your doctor. You should not get pregnant or father a child while taking this medicine.

When To Call Your Doctor

You should call your doctor if you have:

- irregular heartbeat
- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- trouble breathing
- swollen lips or tongue
- fever or chills
- muscle stiffness
- skin problems (sores, peeling skin, severe rash)
- nausea or vomiting.

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you want more complete medicine information or if you have questions.