

Rituximab (Rituxan®)

About This Drug

Rituximab is used to treat cancer. It is given in the vein (IV)

Possible Side Effects

- Fever and chills
- Tiredness and weakness
- Infection
- While you are getting this drug in your vein (IV), you may have a reaction to the drug. Sometimes you may be given medication to stop or lessen these side effects. Your nurse will check you closely for these signs: fever or shaking chills, flushing, facial swelling, feeling dizzy, headache, trouble breathing, rash, itching, chest tightness, or chest pain. **These reactions may happen after your infusion. If this happens, call 911 for emergency care.**
- A decrease in the number of white blood cells. This may raise your risk of infection.

Note: Each of the side effects above was reported in 25% or greater of patients treated with Rituximab. Not all possible side effects are included above.

Warnings and Precautions

- Tumor lysis syndrome: This drug may act on the cancer cells very quickly. This may affect how your kidneys work.
- Severe infections, including viral, bacterial and fungal, which can be life-threatening.
- Severe infusion reactions, which can be life-threatening.
- Abnormal heart beat.
- Changes in your kidney function, which can cause kidney failure and be life-threatening.
- Bowel obstruction - a partial or complete blockage of your small and/or large intestine.
- Perforation - a hole in your small and/or large intestine.
- Severe allergic skin reaction. You may develop blisters on your skin that are filled with fluid or a severe red rash all over your body that may be painful and very rarely be fatal. You may have soreness of the mouth and throat. You may have red areas, white patches, or sores that hurt.
- Reactivation of the hepatitis B virus if you have ever been exposed to the virus which can affect your liver function and cause liver failure and be life-threatening.
- Changes in your central nervous system can happen. The central nervous system is made up of your brain and spinal cord. You could feel extreme tiredness, agitation, or confusion, or have

hallucinations (see or hear things that are not there), trouble understanding or speaking, loss of control of your bowels or bladder, eyesight changes, numbness or lack of strength to your arms, legs, face, or body, and coma. If you start to have any of these symptoms let your doctor know right away.

Note: Some of the side effects above are very rare. If you have concerns and/or questions, please discuss them with your medical team.

Important Information

- Talk to your doctor before receiving any vaccinations during your treatment. Some vaccinations are not recommended while receiving rituximab.

Treating Side Effects

- Manage tiredness by pacing your activities for the day.
- Be sure to include periods of rest between energy-draining activities.
- To decrease the risk of infection, wash your hands regularly.
- Avoid close contact with people who have a cold, the flu, or other infections.
- Take your temperature as your doctor or nurse tells you, and whenever you feel like you may have a fever.
- Drink plenty of fluids (a minimum of eight glasses per day is recommended).
- If you get a rash do not put anything on it unless your doctor or nurse says you may. Keep the area around the rash clean and dry. Ask your doctor for medicine if your rash bothers you.
- Infusion reactions may occur after your infusion. **If this happens, call 911 for emergency care.**

Food and Drug Interactions

- There are no known interactions of rituximab with food.
- This drug may interact with other medicines. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the prescription and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs and others) that you are taking at this time. Also, check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new prescription or over-the-counter medicines, or dietary supplements to make sure that there are no interactions.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any of these symptoms and/or any new or unusual symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
- Chills
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded.

- Confusion and/or agitation
- Hallucinations
- Trouble understanding or speaking
- Blurry vision or changes in your eyesight
- Numbness or lack of strength to your arms, legs, face, or body
- Wheezing or trouble breathing
- Chest pain or symptoms of a heart attack. Most heart attacks involve pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes. The pain may go away and come back or it can be constant. It can feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain. Sometimes pain is felt in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach. **If any of these symptoms last 2 minutes, call 911.**
- Feeling that your heart is beating in a fast or not normal way (palpitations)
- Tiredness that interferes with your daily activities
- Flu-like symptoms: fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, and fatigue (low energy, feeling weak)
- Difficulty swallowing
- Abdominal pain that does not go away
- Throwing up more than 3 times a way
- Loose bowel movements (diarrhea) 4 times a day or loose bowel movements with lack of strength or a feeling of being dizzy
- No bowel movement in 3 days or when you feel uncomfortable
- Decreased urine
- A new rash or a rash that is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Signs of infusion reaction: fever or shaking chills, flushing, facial swelling, feeling dizzy, headache, trouble breathing, rash, itching, chest tightness, or chest pain. **If this happens, call 911 for emergency care.**
- While you are getting this drug, please tell your nurse right away if you have any pain, redness, or swelling at the site of the injection
- Signs of possible liver problems: dark urine, pale bowel movements, bad stomach pain, feeling very tired and weak, unusual itching, or yellowing of the eyes or skin
- Signs of tumor lysis: Confusion or agitation, decreased urine, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, muscle cramping, numbness and/or tingling, seizures.
- If you think you may be pregnant

Reproduction Warnings

- **Pregnancy warning:** This drug can have harmful effects on the unborn baby. Women of child bearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment and for at least 12 months after treatment. Let your doctor know right away if you think you may be pregnant.
- **Breastfeeding warning:** Women should not breastfeed during treatment and for 6 months after treatment because this drug could enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** Fertility studies have not been done with this drug. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children. Ask for information on sperm or egg banking.

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