

Belimumab

[Bee-LIM-you-mab]
Benlysta®

<http://Rheuminfo.com>
your rheumatology resource

How to use this medication

What is it



Some people with lupus have too much protein called BLYS (Bliss). BLYS turns on special immune cells called B-cells that attack the body. Benlysta is a biologic medicine that blocks the activity of BLYS.

Given by intravenous (IV) infusion



Belimumab is given by an intravenous infusion (IV) by a trained nurse.

Given once every 4 weeks



You will receive an infusion on week 0, week 2, and then every 4 weeks. Each infusion takes about 60 minutes.

Give it some time



Although some patients can feel better soon after receiving the medication, in others it can take a little longer even up to 3 or 4 months.

What you need to do

Get occasional blood tests



Have your blood tested occasionally (your doctor will tell you how often). This is important to monitor your lupus and make sure belimumab isn't affecting your blood counts.

Don't get pregnant or breastfeed



Belimumab has not been studied in pregnancy. Let your doctor know if you are planning to get pregnant or if you are breastfeeding.

Don't take if you have an infection



Belimumab can make it harder for you to fight off infections. Call your doctor if:

1. You develop a fever
2. You think you have an infection
3. You are given antibiotics to treat an infection

Side effects & important facts

Infusion reaction



Belimumab can rarely cause an allergic reaction during the infusion.

Nausea & diarrhea



Some people feel unwell with nausea / vomiting when they take belimumab. Belimumab can also cause diarrhea.

Headache



Belimumab can rarely cause a headache.

Heart problems



Tell your doctor if you develop chest pain or shortness of breath.

Depression



Let your doctor know if you experience worsening depression or thoughts of suicide while taking belimumab.

Surgery



Belimumab should be stopped before surgery. It can be restarted once things have healed and there is no sign of infection. If you are having surgery, talk to your doctor about belimumab.

Cancer



Very rare cases of cancer have been seen in patients receiving belimumab. It is not known if belimumab causes cancer. Tell your doctor if you have had cancer in the past.

When should I call my doctor

Please call if you need to stop

- If you feel sick and want to stop
- If you are concerned about any side effects



Other reasons to call your doctor:



Fever or think you have an infection



If you are having surgery



If you become pregnant



If you plan to get any vaccinations



Depression or suicidal thoughts