

How to use this medication

What is it



Some people with arthritis have special immune cells called B-cells that attack the joints. Rituximab is a biologic medicine that kills B-cells and helps to treat autoimmune diseases.

Given by intravenous (IV) infusion



Rituximab is given by an intravenous infusion (IV) by a trained nurse. Each infusion can take from 4 to 6 hours.

Two infusions



Rituximab is given on day 0 and again 2 weeks later. The treatment may be repeated every 6 months although some people can go longer between treatments.

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



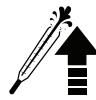
Have your blood tested occasionally (your doctor will tell you how often). This is important to make sure rituximab isn't affecting your blood counts.

Don't get pregnant or breastfeed



Rituximab 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



Rituximab 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

Make sure to get hepatitis B testing



All patients should have a blood test to check for hepatitis B before starting rituximab.

Side effects & important facts

Infusion reaction



Rituximab can rarely cause an allergic reaction during the infusion. It is rare for these reactions to be serious. To prevent infusion reactions, a medication called solumedrol (steroid) is given before each infusion.

Heart problems



Rituximab has been associated with abnormal heart rhythms. Tell your doctor if you have a heart rhythm problem.

Rare skin reactions



Severe skin reactions have rarely been reported in patients receiving rituximab.

Rare brain infection



Patients have very rarely developed a rare brain infection called PML while taking rituximab. This is very rare.

Surgery



Rituximab 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 rituximab.

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



If you develop a rash