

## In Summary

### What you need to know about rituximab?

- Patients may experience side effects during the infusions but these are mild in severity and will improve with subsequent infusions.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you experience any severe rash, dizziness, blurry vision or confusion at any point after the infusion
- Do not take over-the-counter medicines, supplements or herbal medicines without checking with your doctor/pharmacist/advanced practiced nurse first.
- For patinets who intend to start a family, consult your doctor before you start the treatment.
- If you have any questions about the treatment, please discuss it with your doctor/advanced practice nurse at 65762418 or Pharmacist at 63265077.

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# Rituximab



## **This leaflet only provides information for patients being treated with rituximab (500mg/50mL).**

### **About your medicine**

- Rituximab is an antibody which targets a protein called B cells which is part of your immune system.
- People with autoimmune disorder have abnormal B cells. These abnormal B cells can attack a person's own body even if there is no infection, resulting in autoimmune responses.
- By temporarily removing the harmful B cells, this medicine can help to control the autoimmune responses and improve your autoimmune condition.
- This medicine is usually used in people who have already tried other medicines which have stopped working, not worked well enough or have intolerable side effects to other common medications used.

### **How is the medicine given?**

- Two doses of intravenous infusions are given 2 weeks apart. Each infusion is administered over 5-6 hours.

### **How long does it take for the medicine to be effective?**

- The effects of rituximab begin about 6 weeks after the infusions.
- The full effects usually occur by the 3rd month, and last up to 9 months.

### **What are the possible side effects of the medicine?**

- During and up to 24 hours after the infusion, you may experience a drop in blood pressure. Please check with your doctor/pharmacist about whether you need to stop any of your blood pressure medicines prior to the infusion.
- Some patients may experience mild throat tightening, flu-like symptoms, rash, itchiness, dizziness and back pain. These symptoms can be reduced by receiving a steroid injection before the infusion, along with paracetamol and diphenhydramine.
- If any of the following side effects still occur, please alert the person administering the infusion immediately.
  - Throat tightening
  - Flu-like symptoms
  - Rash
  - Dizziness
  - Headaches
- After the infusion, you may
  - Be more prone to getting colds, sinusitis and other common infections
  - Experience abnormal sensations of the skin such as numbness, tingling, prickling or burning
  - Headaches or migraines
  - Indigestion, diarrhoea, acid reflux, irritation or ulceration of the throat and mouth
  - Pain while passing urine

### **When do I seek immediate medical attention?**

- Seek medical attention if you develop a severe skin rash, severe mouth/skin irritation, high fever (more than 38°C) and pain while passing urine, chest pains, rapid heartbeats, throat tightness, or wheezing.
- Dizziness, vision loss, memory loss, difficulty in walking or confusion

### **What should I do when I am taking the medicine?**

- Avoid overcrowded places.

### **Can I take other medicines or supplements?**

- Always alert you doctor/pharmacist/advanced practiced nurse
  - If you are currently taking, or previously have taken any other medicines or supplements or traditional medicines.
  - If you are planning to get vaccinations in the future in preparation to travel to other countries.

### **What special dietary instructions should I follow?**

- Do not consume raw or undercooked food.

### **Can I start a family or breastfeed?**

- Use of effective contraception is critical throughout the course of this treatment and for 12 months after treatment has stopped.
- Rituximab can be excreted into breast milk. Hence it is not advisable to breastfeed while you are under treatment and until up to 1 year afterwards.