

Rituximab
 (Rituxan®)

Patient Information

Updated: 10.2019

USED FOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple sclerosis, including relapsing remitting multiple sclerosis (MS) and progressive MS. Rituximab will not cure MS. It may reduce flare-ups and slow disease progression. 	
HOW IT WORKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rituximab is an antibody that suppresses the immune system by targeting B cells and eliminating them from the body, which is thought to help reduce injury to the nervous system from multiple sclerosis. 	
HOW IT IS GIVEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rituximab is mixed in a 500-1000mL fluid bag and is given by infusion through a needle placed in a vein in your arm (intravenous infusion). You will be required to go to an infusion center for the administration of the drug. 	
DOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rituximab is initially dosed at 500-1000 mg IV for 1 dose or if 2 doses, then they will be 14 days apart. It is typically re-infused every 6 months to 1 year thereafter. 	
UCSF INFUSION CENTERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BEFORE scheduling your appointment with an infusion center, you must get authorization from your insurance. 	
	<p>Ida Friend Infusion Center (Mt. Zion)</p> <p>1600 Divisadero St., 5th Floor San Francisco, CA 94143 Phone: (415) 353-7155 Hours: Monday to Friday 8 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Ron Conway Family Gateway Medical Building (Mission Bay)</p> <p>1825 Fourth St., Third Floor San Francisco, CA 94158 Phone: (415) 353-7155 Hours: Monday to Friday 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. Saturday 8:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. Sunday 10:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.</p>
WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE INFUSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When first starting Rituximab, the rate of infusion will be slower to reduce your risk of any side effects, then the rate will increase based on how well you tolerate the medication infusion. Expect to be at the infusion center for 3 to 6 hours. You will be observed for at least 1 hour after the infusion. 	

<p>INFUSION SIDE EFFECTS AND REACTIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOST COMMON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rash and itching • Flu-like symptoms (headache, fatigue, low grade fever, chills) • Sore throat (itchy, scratchy throat) • Achy joints within hours of the infusion • More frequent upper respiratory tract infections • You will also be monitored closely for severe hypersensitivity reactions and treated with medications if any of these symptoms occur: hives, dizziness, fever, rash, chills, itching, nausea, flushing, low blood pressure, shortness of breath, and chest pain
<p>PRE-INFUSION MEDICATIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 minutes BEFORE THE INFUSION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acetaminophen (Tylenol) • Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) • Famotidine (Pepcid) • IV Steroid (Dexamethasone or Methylprednisolone)
<p>RARE, BUT SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious infections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bacterial, fungal, viral • Hepatitis B virus reactivation • Progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Rare brain infection that usually leads to death or severe disability. ⇒ Tell your doctor right away if you have any new or worsening symptoms (problems with thinking, balance, eye sight, weakness on 1 side of the body, strength , or using your arms or legs). • Possible malignancy (cancer) • Severe skin and mouth reactions • Low blood cell counts
<p>MONITORING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEFORE starting Rituximab, you will need a complete blood cell count, lymphocyte subsets, chemistries, liver function tests, immunoglobulin G and immunoglobulin M, testing for viral hepatitis, HIV, and tuberculosis. • If any “live” or “live attenuated “ vaccines are required, these should be given at least 6 weeks prior to your dose of Rituximab. • Prior to re-infusion, safety labs will be repeated. Tuberculosis testing should be repeated annually.
<p>DRUG INTERACTIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rituximab taken before or after other medicines that weaken the immune system could increase your risk of getting infections.
<p>MORE INFORMATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Websites: www.rituxan.com, www.nationalmssociety.org • Clinical Trials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hauser SL, et al. N Engl J Med 2008; 358:676-688. • Hawker K, et al. Ann Neurol. 2009 Oct;66(4):460-71.