

# Rituximab including biosimilars: Patient drug information

**Brand Names: US:** Rituxan; Truxima

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat rheumatoid arthritis.
- It is used to treat granulomatosis with polyangiitis (GPA; used to be known as Wegener's granulomatosis).
- It is used to treat microscopic polyangiitis.
- It is used to treat a skin problem called pemphigus vulgaris.
- It is used to treat types of leukemia and lymphoma.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

## What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you are allergic to mouse proteins, talk with the doctor.
- If you have an infection.
- If you have active hepatitis B infection.
- If you have had a vaccine in the past month.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug or within 6 months after your last dose.

## What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- You may have more of a chance of getting an infection. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu. Some infections have been very bad and even deadly.
- Call your doctor right away if you have any signs of infection like fever, chills, flu-like signs, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or a wound that will not heal.

- Talk with your doctor before getting any vaccines. Use of some vaccines with this drug may either raise the chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- Make sure you are up to date with all your vaccines before treatment with this drug.
- Heart problems like heart failure and abnormal heartbeats have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these heart problems have been deadly. Call your doctor right away if you have a fast, slow, or abnormal heartbeat; severe dizziness or passing out; or shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- This drug may cause harm to an unborn baby. A pregnancy test will be done before you start this drug to show that you are NOT pregnant.

### **What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?**

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of high or low blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, more thirst, more hungry, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- Dizziness.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.

### **What are some other side effects of this drug?**

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Feeling tired or weak.
- Headache.
- Upset stomach or throwing up; stomach pain or diarrhea.
- Runny or stuffy nose.
- Muscle spasm; back, muscle, or joint pain.

- Trouble sleeping.
- Night sweats.

### **How is this drug best taken?**

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.