

Rituximab for Glomerulonephritis

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Prepared by: Renal Program
Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services

WQ85-2423 © July 2024 Nova Scotia Health Authority
To be reviewed July 2027 or sooner, if needed.

Rituximab for Glomerulonephritis

What is rituximab (ri-TUX-i-mab)?

Rituximab is a type of medication known as an immunosuppressant. This medication works by lowering your body's harmful response to immune system diseases like glomerulonephritis. This medication is used to control your disease.

How do I take rituximab?

- Rituximab is given through an intravenous (I.V.) inserted into a vein in your arm using a needle.
- You will receive rituximab at an infusion clinic. You will be enrolled in a patient support program. The support program can help you with drug coverage and making your appointments.
- Most people will get 2 doses, 14 days (2 weeks) apart. After you get your first doses, you may also need more doses in the future to treat your condition. The most common timing between these doses is 6 months. This will depend on your condition and on how you are responding to the medication.

What else do I need to know?

- Rituximab can interact with (affect) some medications. It is important to talk with your health care team before starting any new medications, including over-the-counter medications, supplements, and natural products.
- Talk to your health care team about when to get certain vaccines while taking rituximab. Ask if there are any vaccines you should get to protect you while taking this medication.
- Your chance of an infection may be higher or it may make the vaccine not work as well. Your health care team will talk with you about timing of vaccinations.

What are your questions?

Please ask. We are here to help you.

- Although it is very rare, rituximab may lower your body’s ability to fight off a brain infection called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML). **Tell your health care team or get help right away if you have:**
 - › Confusion, dizziness, or loss of balance
 - › Trouble talking or walking
 - › Vision problems
 - › Seizures (abnormal electrical brain activity that can cause changes in how you behave, move, or feel)

- Biosimilar medications are like generic brands of biologic medications. They cost less than biologic medications.
- Nova Scotia Health uses a biosimilar rituximab called Ruxience™. The biosimilar rituximab is made to be as safe and work as well as the original biologic medication called Rituxan™.
- To be approved, biosimilar medications must pass tests to make sure that they work similar enough to the original.

Is rituximab safe during pregnancy and breastfeeding?

- Rituximab can affect a fetus. Talk with your health care team about the risks before taking rituximab if you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant.
- Breastfeeding or chestfeeding is **not** recommended while taking rituximab.

How will I know if the medication is working?

- You will have regular blood tests while taking this medication. This is to check how your body responds to rituximab and how it is affecting your kidney disease.
- These tests will also help your health care team to lower any side effects.

What are the possible side effects?

Infusion-related:

- Rarely, some people may have allergy-like symptoms to rituximab. You will be given medications (like Benadryl®) before your infusion to lower any allergic symptoms. The medication will be given more slowly during your first infusion.
- Your nurse will check on you regularly during your I.V. infusion. Tell your nurse if you have any of the following flu-like symptoms:
 - › Headache
 - › Weakness
 - › Fever (temperature above 38° C or 100.4° F) or chills
 - › Aches or pains
 - › Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach)
 - › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
 - › Sweating
 - › Dizziness
 - › Trouble breathing
 - › Chest feels tight
 - › Swelling
 - › Flushing
 - › Itching
 - › Rash

- Rituximab may lower your white blood cells (cells that fight infection), red blood cells (cells that carry oxygen), or platelets (cells that help your blood clot). Your regular blood tests will check for this. **Tell your health care team if you have bruising or bleeding.**
- Rituximab may increase your risk of getting an infection. Infections can be more serious when you are on rituximab, as it lowers your body's ability to fight infection.
- Wash your hands often and avoid close contact with anyone who may be sick. Follow Public Health advice, and consider wearing a mask if you are in a high risk setting. **If you are not feeling well and have these symptoms, tell your health care team right away:**
 - › Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
 - › Chills
 - › Bad sore throat
 - › Shortness of breath