

## Serious brain infection called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML)

Rarely, rituximab can cause a serious brain infection called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy, or PML. This can lead to very severe disability and may be life-threatening.

PML is caused by a virus. In most healthy adults, the virus remains inactive and is therefore harmless. It is not known why the virus is activated in some people, but it may be linked to having a weak immune system.

### Tell your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse immediately if you get any of the following signs of PML:

- Confusion, memory loss, or problems thinking straight
- Loss of balance or a change in the way you walk or talk
- Loss of strength or weakness on one side of the body
- Blurred vision or loss of vision

Tell your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse immediately if you get any of the signs of PML above during treatment or for up to 2 years after your last dose of rituximab.

### Patient Alert Card

The Patient Alert Card contains Important Safety Information that you need to know before, during, and after treatment with rituximab.

- Your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse should give you a rituximab Patient Alert Card every time you have a rituximab infusion
- Keep the Patient Alert Card with you all the time. You can keep it in your wallet or purse
- Show the Patient Alert Card to any doctor, nurse, or dentist you see— not just the specialist who prescribes your rituximab
- Tell your partner or caregiver about your treatment, and show them the Patient Alert Card because they may notice side effects that you are not aware of
- Keep the Patient Alert Card with you for 2 years after your last dose of rituximab. This is because the side effects of rituximab on the immune system can last for several months, so side effects can occur even when you are no longer being treated with rituximab



### Keep the Patient Alert Card with you at all times

- Show it to your partner or caregiver
- Show it to any healthcare professional you see, for example your doctor, nurse, dentist or pharmacist
- Keep it for 2 years after your last dose of rituximab

### Reporting of side effects

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. This includes any possible side effects not listed in the package leaflet. You can also report side effects directly via the Yellow Card Scheme at [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard) or search MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store. By reporting side effects, you can help provide more information on the safety of this medicine.



RUXIENCE<sup>®</sup> ▼  
(rituximab)

[Patient Guide \(for non-oncology diseases\)](#)

### What you should know before receiving this medicine

[Important Safety Information for patients receiving rituximab therapy](#)

[Refer to the product package leaflet for more information on the possible side effects of rituximab](#)

▼ This medicinal product is subject to additional monitoring. This will allow quick identification of new safety information. You can help by reporting any side effects you may get (see below).

#### Reporting of side effects

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. This includes any possible side effects not listed in the package leaflet. You can also report side effects directly via the Yellow Card Scheme at [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard) or search MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store.



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## About this guide

The information in this guide is for patients who are prescribed rituximab for non-oncology diseases. Please read this guide carefully—it is important for you to know about the benefits and risks of rituximab.

This guide will:

- Answer questions you may have about the potential risks associated with rituximab—this will help you and your doctor decide if it is the right treatment for you
- Explain what rituximab is
- Tell you what you need to know before starting rituximab
- Tell you about some of the important side effects that you need to be aware of—these include a rare but serious brain infection called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy, or PML
  - The full list of side effects can be found within the product package information leaflet.
- Tell you what the signs of an infection and PML are
- Tell you what to do if you think you are getting an infection or PML
- Tell you about the Patient Alert Card

## What you should know about rituximab

### About rituximab

Rituximab affects your immune system; it may make you more likely to get an infection. Some infections may be serious and require treatment.

### Taking rituximab

Rituximab is given as an infusion (a drip) into the vein.

Like all medicines, rituximab can cause side effects. When experiencing side effects, consider the following:

- If you are prescribed rituximab in combination with other medicines, ask your doctor or pharmacist if there is the potential for increased side effects
- Some side effects may be serious and require treatment. Rarely, some side effects may be life-threatening

If you experience any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away, please tell your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse immediately. If you have any further questions about rituximab or its potential side effects, ask your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse. See the first and last page of this guide for details on how to report side effects.

Keep a list of all of your other medicines with you. You should show them to anyone who is giving you medical care, such as a doctor, pharmacist, nurse, or dentist.

**Tell your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse before taking rituximab if you meet any of the following criteria:**

### Infections

**Tell your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse before taking rituximab if you:**

- Currently have an infection (even a mild one, such as a cold). Your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse may tell you to wait until the infection is gone before you are prescribed rituximab
- Experience a lot of infections or have experienced many in the past
- Experience or have experienced a severe infection such as tuberculosis, blood poisoning (sepsis), or any other condition that weakens your immune system
- Have a condition that may make you more likely to get a serious infection that needs treatment

### Other conditions

**Tell your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse before taking rituximab if you:**

- Have heart disease
- Have breathing problems
- Are pregnant, trying to become pregnant, or are breastfeeding
- Have or have ever had viral hepatitis or any other liver disease
- Have had any abnormal results from your blood or urine lab tests

### Other medications

**Tell your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse before taking rituximab if you:**

- Are taking medicines for high blood pressure
- Are taking or have ever taken medicines that may affect your immune system; these include immunosuppressants (medicines that suppress your immune system) or a type of cancer treatment called chemotherapy
- Have had chemotherapy that affects your heart (cardiotoxic chemotherapy)
- Are taking or have recently taken any other medicines. These include medicines bought from a pharmacy, supermarket, or health store

## Vaccinations

**Tell your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse before taking rituximab if you:**

- Think you may need to have a vaccination in the near future, including any vaccinations required to travel to other countries

Some vaccines should not be given at the same time as rituximab or for several months after you receive rituximab. Your doctor will check if you should receive any vaccinations before you are prescribed rituximab.

Tell your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse if the above applies to you. If you are not sure, talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse before you are given rituximab.

## During or after treatment with rituximab

Rituximab affects your immune system and may make you more likely to get an infection. Some infections may be serious and require treatment.

**Tell your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse immediately if you experience any of the following possible signs of infection:**

- A high temperature (fever) with or without chills
- A cough that will not go away
- Pain when you have not hurt yourself
- Feeling generally unwell, tired, or lethargic
- Burning pain when passing urine