

# Rituximab (Mabthera®) treatment - how it is given

Cancer Services

Information for patients

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## Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to give you information about a change in the way that we give rituximab.

Rituximab is a type of anti-cancer drug called a monoclonal antibody. You will have received an information leaflet telling you about rituximab and its possible side effects.

## How is rituximab given?

Previously rituximab has been given as an intravenous infusion (into a vein).

However, recent research has shown that giving rituximab as an injection under the skin (subcutaneously) is as effective as giving it intravenously for some types of cancer.

The injection is given into the fatty layer of tissue under the skin of your abdomen and will mean that you do not need a drip.

## Are there any side effects?

When rituximab is given as an injection under the skin, some patients experience temporary side effects at or around the injection site. These may include discomfort, swelling, bruising, bleeding, skin redness, itching and a rash. If any of these occur, they will usually last only 24 hours.

## Will the change have any benefits for me?

Giving rituximab in this way will reduce the length of time for treatment. It takes ten minutes to give the injection compared with an hour and a half for the intravenous infusion. However, you will need to stay for a short period of time (fifteen minutes) for observation after the injection has been given.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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## Will all patients receive rituximab by this route?

In the future, whilst most rituximab will be given as an injection under the skin, some patients will still need to be given rituximab as a drip.

Those patients who will continue to receive rituximab as an intravenous infusion include:

- Those receiving rituximab for the first time.
- Those receiving rituximab before having chemotherapy treatment.

## Important information

The nurses will do a number of safety checks to make sure that you are given the right drugs in the right way. You may ask to check your own treatment if you wish.

If you usually take anti-hypertensive medications (to lower your blood pressure) please do not take them before your injection.

You will be given antihistamine and paracetamol tablets before your injection.

## Who can I speak to if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about your rituximab, please speak to a member of nursing or medical staff.

Judy Kilby, Chemotherapy Specialist Nurse: 07506 827 347

Lynda Beck, Lymphoma Nurse Specialist: 0116 258 5738 or 0300 303 1573, and ask for pager number 4588

### Emergency number (24 hours, 7 days a week)

**0808 178 2212**

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