Rituximab (Rituxan®)  
(“ri TUK si mab”)

How drug is given: by vein (IV)

Purpose: to kill cancer cells in Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia, and other cancers

Things that may occur during or within hours of treatment

- **Facial flushing (warmth or redness of the face), itching, or a skin rash could occur.** You may also get some swelling of your lips and tongue. These symptoms are due to an allergic response, and should be reported to your doctor or nurse right away.

- **Flu-like symptoms, such as fever and chills may occur 30 minutes to 2 hours after the infusion.** If these occur, your doctor may suggest taking acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to help control the symptoms. Please let your doctor or nurse know if acetaminophen (Tylenol) is not effective, since other drugs may be given.

Things that may occur a few days to weeks later

1. **Rituximab may cause tumor lysis syndrome (TLS).** If you start to feel joint pain, swelling, or stiffness, you should contact your doctor.

2. **Mild nausea may occur.**

3. **Some patients may feel very tired, also known as fatigue.** You may need to rest or take naps more often. Mild to moderate exercise can also be helpful in maintaining your energy. Talk with your doctor or nurse.

4. **Your blood cell counts may drop.** This is known as bone marrow suppression. This includes a decrease in your:
   - Red blood cells, which carry oxygen in your body to help give you energy
   - White blood cells, which fight infection in your body
   - Platelets, which help clot the blood to stop bleeding
5. You may feel pain or weakness in your joints or muscles. This may happen 2 to 3 days after you get rituximab. It usually gets better in less than a week. If you are bothered by pain or weakness in your joints or muscles, ask your doctor or nurse what type of drugs you may use to help.

Things that may occur after treatment ends (even months years later)

- **Complications for pregnant women and new mothers:** It is very important to use birth control if you are having sex after receiving this drug, because it can be harmful to an unborn baby. Women should not breast-feed while receiving rituximab. If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your doctor or nurse.

- Patients who have been treated with rituximab can get a very rare brain infection called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML). This is caused by a virus and can be fatal. If you have a new or sudden change in your thinking, eyesight, balance or strength, tell your doctor right away.

The above information includes some, but not necessarily all, of the possible side effects of this medication. The side effects in this teaching sheet may not be the same ones you experience. Your side effects may be different, depending on how often you receive treatment (your schedule) and how much you receive each time (your dosage). Side effects may also vary if you take other medications. Please talk with your doctor or nurse if you have questions about possible side effects you may experience. This document should not take the place of conversations with members of your health care team.

If you experience any significant change in your health during or after treatment, contact a member of your health care team right away.