

What is belimumab?

- An immunosuppressant that is used to control symptoms and prevent flare-ups of lupus nephritis (inflammation of the kidneys caused by systemic lupus erythematosus).
- Belimumab lowers your body's harmful response to lupus by decreasing the survival and growth of lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell. It is often used with other medications such as cyclophosphamide, mycophenolate, and prednisone.
- Available as an injection (shot) that can be given into a vein or into fatty tissue.
- If you receive belimumab as an injection into the abdomen or thigh and missed a dose on your planned day, inject a dose as soon as you remember. Then, inject your next dose at your regularly scheduled time or continue weekly dosing based on the new day injected.
- It is very important to take each dose of belimumab because missing a few doses may cause flare-ups of disease symptoms. Inform your doctor's office or kidney care clinic of missed doses.

How do I use it?

- When given into a vein, belimumab is given as an infusion over 1 hour by a nurse.
- Belimumab is also available as a 200 mg prefilled syringe that can be given into fatty tissue in the abdomen or thigh. The first injection is usually given or supervised by a health care professional, then the following doses can be given by patients themselves after they receive proper training. Each syringe should be warmed to room temperature for 30 minutes before use and given into the abdomen or thigh using a different site each time. If a dose of 400 mg is required, 2 separate 200 mg injections are needed and should be given at least 5 cm or 2 inches apart.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- If you receive belimumab by infusion and missed your scheduled dose, call the patient support program as a missed dose should be rescheduled and given as soon as possible.
- Very rarely, some patients may be allergic to belimumab. If this occurs, your doctor may order an antihistamine (e.g., Benadryl) or other medications for you to take before your infusion to decrease allergic symptoms.
- Other side effects may be more likely to occur the first time you receive belimumab or if you receive it too quickly; therefore, belimumab may be given more slowly during the first infusion.
- Your nurse will check on you regularly during your infusion. Report any flu-like symptoms to your nurse or doctor right away, such as headache, weakness, fever, shakes, aches, pains, nausea, diarrhea and sweating, or other symptoms such as dizziness, shortness of breath, chest tightness, swelling of face, throat, arms or legs, flushing, itching or a rash.
- Common side effects include diarrhea, nausea, fever, stuffy or runny nose and sore throat, persistent cough, trouble sleeping, leg or arm pain, low mood, headache, and pain, redness, itching,

or swelling at the injection site (when given into fatty tissue). If these symptoms continue or become bothersome, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

- Since belimumab lowers your body's ability to fight off infections, wash your hands often and stay away from people with infections, colds or flu. Contact your doctor right away if you feel you may have a cold or other infection, e.g., if you experience high fever, chills, very bad sore throat, bad cough, chest congestion, pain with passing urine etc.
- Very rarely, belimumab may also lower your body's ability to fight off a bad brain infection. Notify your doctor if you experience any memory loss, trouble thinking, confusion, dizziness or loss of balance, difficulty talking or walking, vision problems or seizures.

Drug interactions with belimumab

- You should discuss with your doctor or pharmacist before beginning any new medications (non-prescription and prescription), herbal products or vitamins.
- Do not receive any vaccines without talking to your doctor because the use with belimumab may either increase your chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.

Is belimumab harmful during pregnancy?

- Belimumab crosses the placenta and the highest exposure to the fetus is during the third trimester. It is unknown whether the medication is safe for the fetus. As a result, until more information is available,

belimumab is not recommended during pregnancy.

- Belimumab should be stopped once pregnancy is confirmed. If exposure occurs during pregnancy, white blood cells and signs of problems with the immune system should be monitored in the newborn.
- Belimumab is transferred into breast milk. However, the amount of it in breast milk may be limited and it is unlikely to be absorbed in the gut by infants. Use of belimumab may be continued or started in breastfeeding patients.

Reordering procedure

- To refill your medication, speak to your doctor or pharmacist.