

## **Rituximab (Rituxan®)**

Rituxan is an off-label disease modifying therapy administered as an IV infusion initially given twice in two weeks, then given once every 6 months.

*Mechanism of Action-* Rituxan is a recombinant chimeric monoclonal antibody (targeting CD-20 B-cells) that reduces the number and function of certain B-cells. This helps to calm the overactive immune system and improve the disease course of MS. Your practitioner may order immunophenotyping to help guide dosing. Rituximab has been used successfully to treat autoimmune conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis (approved use), SLE (off label), MS (off label) and NMOSD (off label)

Infusion Reactions: Rituximab can have infusion reactions including headache, flushing, low blood pressure and fatigue. Allergic reactions including anaphylaxis have been reported.

Infections: The drug can also increase the risk of infection including bladder infections, sinusitis, upper respiratory tract infection as well as pneumonia and serious infections. Reactivation of hepatitis B has been reported with rituximab.

Vaccinations/Immunizations: We recommend against live attenuated vaccines. We also recommend vaccinations be administered 6 weeks prior to an upcoming rituximab infusion. We strongly recommend talking to your MS practitioner before having any vaccination / immunizations. Rituximab may decrease the effectiveness of immunizations.

Pregnancy: Women of childbearing potential must agree to use contraception and avoid pregnancy for at least 6 months after their last infusion and only after clearance from their MS practitioner