

Alemtuzumab (Campath®)

How does this medicine work?

Alemtuzumab (al-em-too-zyoo-mab) is a monoclonal antibody. Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-produced substances that can locate and bind to cancer cells wherever they are in the body. Alemtuzumab binds to some types of cancer cells and destroys them.

How is the medicine given?

Alemtuzumab is given as an infusion through a vein (IV) or venous access device in the hospital or clinic. It can also be given as a subcutaneous (sub-Q) injection. The dose is slowly increased each time it is given until a maintenance dose is reached.

Pre-medications are given to help prevent side effects during the infusion. Your child will be monitored closely during the infusion.

Antibiotics will be prescribed to reduce the chance of a serious infection.

Are there any precautions about food or other medicines?

Your child should **not** get any immunizations without the doctor's approval.

Check with the doctor, nurse practitioner, or pharmacist before giving **any** other prescription or non-prescription medicines, herbs, or vitamins.

What are the side effects?

During the infusion:

- Expected
- shaking chills
 - fever
 - mild nausea and vomiting
 - rash
 - low blood pressure

After the infusion:

- Expected
- low blood counts
 - fever
 - fatigue and weakness
 - nausea and vomiting
- Common
- infections (not life-threatening)
 - chills
 - cough
 - rash or itching
 - mouth sores
 - diarrhea
 - dizziness
 - headache
 - tremors
 - back pain
 - trouble breathing
- Occasional
- very low blood counts
 - life-threatening infections

When should I call the clinic?

- fever
- chills
- cough
- hoarseness
- black, tarry stools
- blood in urine or stools
- petechiae (pinpoint-sized red spots anywhere on the skin)
- signs of allergic reaction:
 - sudden rash or hives
 - itching
 - wheezing
 - trouble breathing - **call 911**

What else do I need to know?

All caregivers should wear gloves when handling urine, stool, and vomit while your child is getting the chemotherapy infusion and for 48 hours after the chemotherapy is completed. Urine, stool, and vomit can be safely flushed in the sewer system and septic tanks.

Any clothing or bed linens that are contaminated with urine, stool, or vomit should be washed separately from other laundry in hot water and detergent. Anyone handling the contaminated laundry should wear gloves.

Frequent blood samples will be needed to check the effects of the alemtuzumab on your child's blood counts.

Good mouth care will help prevent mouth sores.

You and your child should know the names of all the medicines he or she is taking.

Share this information with anyone involved in your child's care.

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child but provides general information. If you have any questions, please call the oncology clinic or pharmacy.

For more reading material about this and other health topics, please call or visit the Family Resource Center library, or visit our Web site: www.childrensmn.org.

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