

## **Belimumab, BENLYSTA® – in the treatment of rheumatic diseases**

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### **Indications**

Belimumab is used for treatment of SLE (systemic lupus erythematosus) when sufficient treatment response is not achieved with traditional antirheumatic drugs or they cannot be used.

### **Drug product and mode of action**

Belimumab belongs to a class of drugs called biologic drugs. Belimumab is an antibody that binds to a soluble protein called B-lymphocyte stimulator (Blys), blocking B-cell stimulation. Belimumab attenuates the immunological inflammatory process and the symptoms associated with connective tissue disease.

### **Dosage and method of administration**

Belimumab is given as intravenous infusion in hospital. The recommended dose is 10 mg/kg on days 0, 14 and 28, and then once every four weeks. The infusion usually takes an hour, during which the patient's condition is monitored by a nurse. After the treatment has been administered, the patient is monitored in hospital for about 30 minutes. Before the onset of infusion, premedication (paraceamol and antihistamine) may be given to prevent drug reactions.

### **Adverse effects**

During the administration of the drug, itching, headache, flulike symptoms and/or a drop in blood pressure may occur. The symptoms are usually mild and disappear quickly. Hives, headache, shortness of breath, dizziness etc. may appear between belimumab infusions, but these adverse effects are very rare. Belimumab may increase susceptibility to infections. Treatment must not be given if the patient has an acute infection or a severe chronic infection.

### **Pregnancy and breastfeeding**

Belimumab is usually not used during pregnancy or breastfeeding. It is recommended that the drug is stopped 4 months before pregnancy.

### **Treatment follow-up**

Safety tests are first taken before the infusion and then once **every 3 months**. The safety tests include the following: **Basic blood count, B-NEUT and ALT. CREA, U-ChemScr, CRP and ESR** are measured in connection with treatment assessment before doctor's appointment every 6–12 months.

### **Other considerations**

Belimumab is stopped for at least a week before and after surgery. The operation is timed so that it takes place when the next dose would be taken. In the case of individual patients, the duration of the drug pause also depends on the nature and urgency of the operation, patient's

overall infection risk, and risk of recurrence of the underlying illness. The use of the drug may be restarted once the wound has healed properly.

Vaccines that contain live attenuated organisms must not be given during treatment. Before the onset of treatment, any dental procedures required must be completed and vaccinations must be up to date.

**Link** [Reumalääkkeiden ohjeet | Reumatalo.fi | Terveyskylä.fi](#) (in Finnish)

[Wellbeing services county of Satakunta](#)