



# PATIENT FACT SHEET

## Belimumab (Benlysta)



### WHAT IS IT?

**Belimumab is the first drug designed to treat lupus.** It was the first drug approved for lupus by the FDA in more than 50 years. It is used in combination with other lupus drugs, such as hydroxychloroquine and steroids. Belimumab treats people with mild or

moderate lupus affecting the skin, joints, and other organs. It works against a protein that triggers certain cells in the immune system to attack different parts of the body.

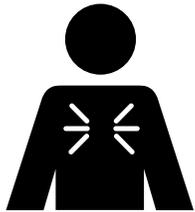


### HOW TO TAKE IT

**Belimumab can be given as an infusion or injection.** When given by infusion, the medication is administered through a needle that is inserted into one of the veins by a health care professional. The infusion lasts about one hour. The dose is adjusted to your weight. The infusion schedule starts at every two weeks for the first four weeks,

and is then given every four weeks. Usually, it takes effect in 12 weeks, but it can take longer in some patients.

Belimumab is also available in a self-injection form. This means you can give it to yourself by injecting under the skin once a week. The dose for the self-injection is 200 mg and is pre-loaded into a syringe or device for you.



### SIDE EFFECTS

**Belimumab can cause certain side effects, although many of these are mild.** The most common side effects include headaches, diarrhea, nausea, muscle aches, and infections, such as colds, bronchitis, and urinary tract infections.

Having fluid put into your veins [infusion] can also cause fevers, muscle aches, headaches, and infections.

Belimumab can lower the number of white blood cells in the blood of some people. It can also cause you to feel down and have thoughts of harming yourself, especially if you have a history of depression.

To know if belimumab is causing side effects, keep track of how long the symptoms last and whether they come back and discuss this with your care provider.



### TELL YOUR DOCTOR

**Before taking belimumab, tell your doctor if you plan to become pregnant.** It is unknown if belimumab is safe for pregnant women to take. You should not try to become pregnant or breastfeed while taking this drug. If you do become pregnant, tell your doctor.

Tell your doctor if you have an infection, a history of cancer, or a history of depression. Belimumab can increase the risk of getting cancer, infections, and depression. Your doctor will talk to you about your own risks. Make sure your doctor knows if you have any concerns or new symptoms while taking belimumab.

Many vaccines, such as the flu shot, the pneumonia shot, the new shingles vaccine (Shingrix), are safe to get while taking belimumab, but some others, such as live vaccines (Zostrix), are not. Talk to your doctor about getting vaccines before starting belimumab.

To keep yourself safe and healthy while taking belimumab, tell your doctor if you have any of the following side effects:

- mood changes such as depression, anxiety, or thoughts about hurting yourself
- chest pain or tightness
- trouble breathing or wheezing
- fever, night sweats, tiredness, or weight loss