



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Belimumab

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

### **Brand Names: US**

Benlysta

### **Brand Names: Canada**

Benlysta

### **What is this drug used for?**

- It is used to treat lupus.

### **Auto-injector shot and prefilled syringes:**

- If your child has been given this form of this drug, talk with the doctor for information about the benefits and risks. Talk with the doctor if you have questions or concerns about giving this drug to your child.

### **What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?**

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about

the allergy and what signs your child had.

- If your child has kidney problems or nervous system problems caused by lupus.
- If your child is taking cyclophosphamide.
- If your child is taking or will be taking another drug like this one.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for your child to take this drug with all of his/her drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

### **What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?**

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- In some drug studies, more deaths happened in people taking this drug compared to people not taking it. Talk with the doctor if you have questions.
- This drug may add to the chance of getting some types of cancer. Talk with the doctor.

- Infusion reactions have happened with this drug. These have happened on the same day as the infusion. Tell your child's doctor if your child has any bad effects during or after the infusion.
- Very bad and sometimes deadly allergic side effects have rarely happened. Talk with your child's doctor.
- Your child may have more chance of getting infections. Have your child wash hands often. Avoid crowds and people with infections, colds, or flu.
- Very bad and sometimes deadly infections have happened in patients who take this drug. If your child has any infection, is taking antibiotics now or in the recent past, or has had many infections, talk with the doctor.
- Make sure your child is up to date with all vaccines before treatment with this drug.
- Talk with the doctor if your child has recently had a vaccine or before your child gets any vaccines. Vaccine use with this drug may either raise the chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- This drug may not work as well in black patients. Talk with the doctor.

### **If your child is or may be sexually active:**

- Have your child use birth control to prevent pregnancy while taking this drug and for 4 months after stopping this drug.

## **If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:**

- If your child gets pregnant while taking this drug or within 4 months after her last dose, call the doctor right away.
- If your child used this drug when she was pregnant, tell the baby's doctor.
- Tell the doctor if your child is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about any risks to the baby.

## **What are some side effects that I need to call my child's doctor about right away?**

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- New or worse behavior or mood changes like depression or thoughts of killing him/herself.

- Chest pain or pressure.
- Slow heartbeat.
- Muscle pain.
- Very bad headache.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Shortness of breath.
- Cold sweats.
- Very upset stomach or throwing up.
- A very bad brain problem called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) may happen with this drug. It may cause disability or death. Tell the doctor right away if your child has signs like confusion, memory problems, low mood (depression), change in the way your child acts, change in strength on 1 side is greater than the other, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, or change in eyesight.

### **What are some other side effects of this drug?**

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Trouble sleeping.
- Headache.
- Upset stomach.

- Diarrhea.
- Nose or throat irritation.
- Pain in arms or legs.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

### **How is this drug best given?**

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.
- Other drugs may be given before this drug to help avoid side effects.

### **What do I do if my child misses a dose?**

- Call your child's doctor to find out what to do.

### **How do I store and/or throw out this drug?**

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your child's doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

### **General drug facts**

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give

anyone else's drug to your child.

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

### **Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer**

This information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions,

adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

### **Last Reviewed Date**

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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