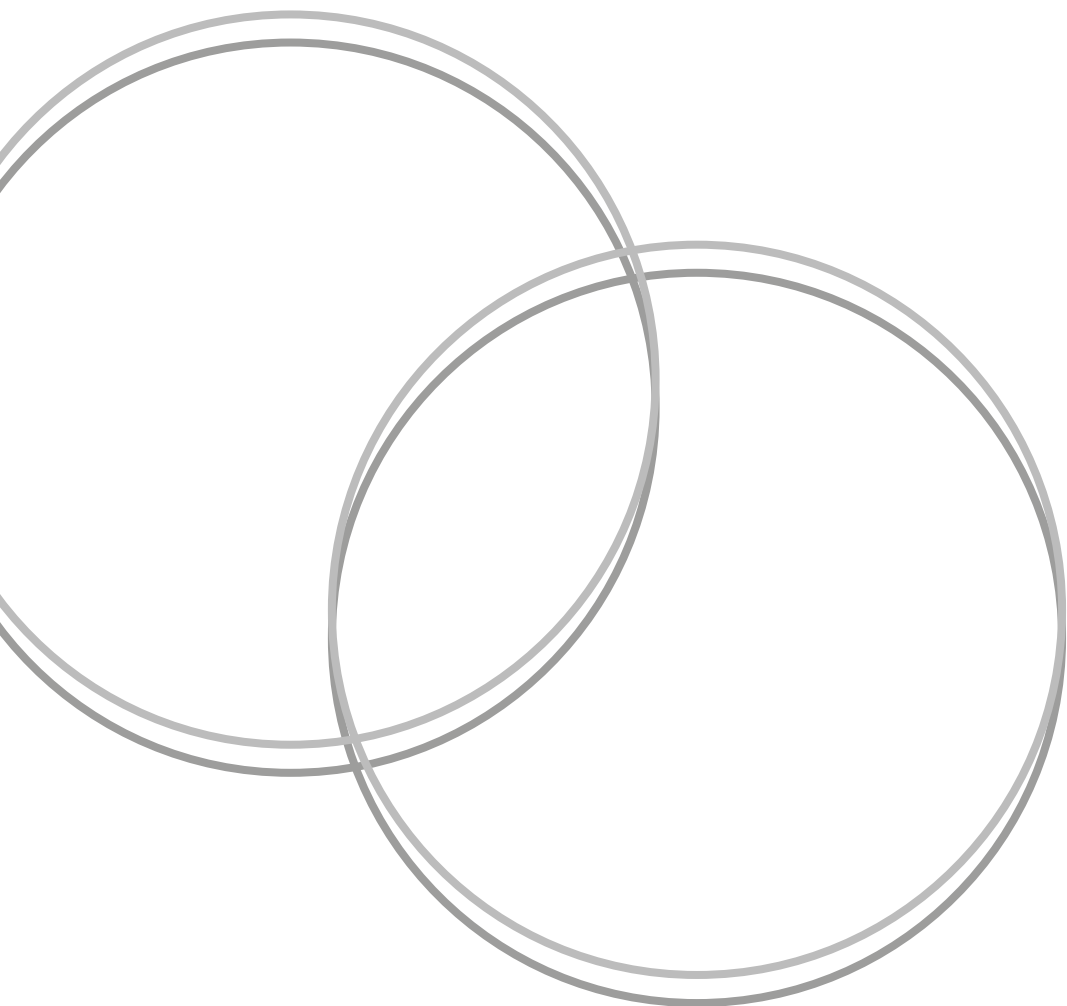


Rituximab treatment for Thyroid Eye Disease

Information for patients



This leaflet explains thyroid eye disease and how rituximab may help. Please ask your doctor or nurse if anything is unclear.

What is thyroid eye disease?

Thyroid eye disease (TED) happens when the immune system causes inflammation and swelling around the eyes.

Symptoms can include:

- Eye pain or pressure
- Red or swollen eyes
- Bulging eyes
- Double vision
- Changes in appearance
- Problems with eyesight (in severe cases)

TED often occurs in people with Graves' disease (an overactive thyroid), but it can also happen when thyroid levels are normal or low.

Why am I being offered rituximab?

You are being offered rituximab because your thyroid eye disease is active and inflamed.

The aim of treatment is to:

- Reduce inflammation
- Prevent the disease from getting worse
- Help protect your eyesight

Rituximab may be used on its own or with other medicines.

What is rituximab?

Rituximab is a medicine that calms down part of the immune system.

In thyroid eye disease, it works by reducing specific immune cells that cause inflammation around the eyes. This allows redness and swelling to settle gradually over time.

Rituximab has been used for many years to treat inflammatory and autoimmune conditions.

How is rituximab given?

- Rituximab is given through a drip into a vein (intravenous infusion)
- Treatment usually takes place in a day unit
- Before you have the Rituximab infusion you will be given two medicines through the cannula: will also be given intravenous methylprednisolone (a steroid) to:
- Chlorphenamine (an antihistamine called Piriton®)
- Methylprednisolone (a steroid)
- You will also be given paracetamol orally prior to the Rituximab infusion
- These all help to reduce the risk of you feeling unwell during the infusion.
- Each infusion can take several hours
- Most people start with one infusion, but this may change depending on your condition

Blood tests and monitoring

Before starting rituximab, you will need tests to make sure treatment is safe. These include:

- Blood tests to check your immune system
- Tests to screen for infections
- A chest X ray

You will also need blood tests:

- Before treatment
- 14 – 28 days after treatment

Your GP can help arrange these tests. It is important that all blood tests are completed.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

- Pregnancy should be avoided for at least 12 months after rituximab treatment
- Effective contraception should be used during this time
- Breastfeeding is not recommended after receiving rituximab

If you are planning a pregnancy, please discuss this with your doctor before starting treatment.

What results can I expect?

- Improvement is usually gradual and may take weeks to months
- The main goal is to reduce inflammation and stop the disease worsening
- Some symptoms may improve, but not all changes can be reversed

Possible side effects

Most people tolerate rituximab well. However, Rituximab has some potential side effects:

Common (around 1 in 100 people) short-term side effects of Rituximab include:

- Allergic reactions such as a rash, low blood pressure or shortness of breath
- Feeling sick
- Flushing
- Flu-like symptoms such as headaches, chills, muscles aches, or fevers
- Increased risk of infections for around six to nine months after each course of treatment whilst your immune system is recovering

Although this is very rare (less than 1 in 10,000 people), Rituximab can cause a condition called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML).

When should I seek help?

Contact us or seek medical help urgently if you develop:

- A fever or signs of infection
- Breathing problems
- Pins and needles, weakness, shakiness or unsteadiness
- Sudden changes in your vision

Please DO NOT come to the Oxford Eye Hospital straight away.

Call our specialist telephone triage number:

Tel: **01865 234 567**

and select the option for 'eye emergencies'.

Monday to Friday 8:30am - 4:30pm

Saturday and Sunday 8.30am – 3.30pm (including Bank Holidays)

You will be able to speak to an ophthalmic health professional who will advise you.

If you need advice out of hours, please phone NHS 111 or your out of hours GP practice.

For less urgent issues contact the Ophthalmology Secretaries:

Tel: **01865 234567**

Email: OculoPlastics@ouh.nhs.uk

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Thyroid Eye Disease Team

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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