

HERCEPTIN

(ALSO CALLED TRASTUZUMAB)

What it Does: Herceptin is a cancer medicine that is known as a monoclonal antibody. An antibody is a part of your body's natural defenses against bacteria. The antibody recognizes the bacteria, binds to them, and helps your immune system destroy them. A monoclonal antibody is an antibody that binds to other targets – such as cancer cells. Herceptin works by binding to a protein (HER2) on the surface of some cancer cells.

How it is Given: Herceptin is given intravenously (by injection into a vein in the arm or port-a-cath.)

Possible Side Effects and What to do About Them:

Allergic Reaction: You will receive premedication to decrease the risk of developing an allergic reaction during your first Herceptin infusion. You will be closely monitored throughout your Herceptin infusion. The most common side effects while receiving this medicine are fever, shaking chills, tiredness, headache, and nausea. If you should experience any shortness of breath or tightness in your throat – notify your nurse immediately. These possible reactions are less common after the first infusion.

Effects on Heart: After receiving Herceptin changes in your heart may occur.

- Notify your physician if you develop any shortness of breath, swelling in feet or legs, or heart palpitations.
- You will have periodic monitoring of your heart while you are taking this drug.