

Gefitinib (Iressa)

About This Medicine

Gefitinib is used to treat cancer. It is given orally (by mouth).

Possible Side Effects

- Skin reactions such as rashes, dry skin, rash with fluid-filled bumps/blisters
- Diarrhea (loose bowel movements)

Note: Each of the side effects above was reported in more than 20% of patients treated with gefitinib. All possible side effects are not included. Your side effects may be different depending on your cancer diagnosis, condition, or if you are receiving other medicines in combination. Please discuss any concerns or questions with your medical team.

Warnings and Precautions

- Inflammation (swelling) and/or scarring of the lungs, which can be life-threatening. You may have a cough and/or trouble breathing.
- Changes in your liver function, which can cause liver failure and be life-threatening
- Severe diarrhea
- Perforation - an abnormal hole in your stomach, small and/or large intestine, which can be life-threatening
- Blurred vision or other changes in eyesight such as eye irritation, watering of the eyes and/or dry eyes
- Severe allergic skin reactions. You may develop blisters on your skin that are filled with fluid or a severe red rash all over your body that may be painful. Skin can sometimes peel off.

Note: Some of the side effects above are very rare. If you have concerns and/or questions, please discuss them with your medical team.

How to Take Your Medicine

- Take the medicine with or without food.

- If you have difficulties swallowing tablets whole, you can dissolve tablets in 4 to 8 oz of water and stir for 15 min, then immediately drink the solution. Rinse the glass with 4 to 8 oz. and drink immediately again.
- **Missed dose:** If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you think about it, unless it is within 12 hours of your next dose, then skip the missed dose and go back to your normal schedule. Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- **Handling:** Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling your medicine, your caretakers should not handle your medicine with bare hands and should wear latex gloves.
- Cytotoxic medicines leave the body through urine and stool, but they can also be present in other body fluids such as blood, vomit, semen, and vaginal fluids. Take precautions to prevent others from coming in contact with your medicine or your body fluids. Follow safety precautions during your treatment and for as long as directed by your health care provider after your treatment. If you take a cytotoxic pill each day, follow these precautions every day.
- **Storage:** Store this medicine in the original container at room temperature.
- **Disposal of unused medicine:** Do not flush any expired and/or unused medicine down the toilet or drain unless you are specifically instructed to do so on the medicine label. Some facilities have take-back programs and/or other options. If you do not have a take-back program in your area, then please discuss with your nurse or your doctor how to dispose of unused medicine.

Treating Side Effects

- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine pale yellow.
- If you have diarrhea, you should drink more fluids so that you do not become dehydrated (lack of water in the body from losing too much fluid). Eat low-fiber foods that are high in protein and calories and avoid foods that can irritate your digestive tracts or lead to cramping.
- Ask your nurse or doctor about medicine that can lessen or stop your diarrhea.
- Moisturize your skin several times a day.
- Avoid sun exposure and apply sunscreen routinely when outdoors.
- If you get a rash do not put anything on it unless your doctor or nurse says you may. Keep the area around the rash clean and dry. Ask your doctor for medicine if your rash bothers you.

Food and Medicine Interactions

- This medicine may interact with grapefruit and grapefruit juice. Talk to your doctor as this could make side effects worse.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist about all other prescription or over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, or others) you are taking before starting this medicine as there are known medicine interactions with gefitinib. Also, check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new prescription, over-the-counter medicines, or dietary supplements to make sure that there are no interactions.
- This medicine may interact with St. John's Wort and may lower the levels of the medicine in your body, which can make it less effective.
- Medicines that treat heartburn and stomach upset may lower the effect of your cancer treatment if taken with gefitinib. Call your doctor to find out what medicine you can take with gefitinib to help with heartburn or stomach upset.

- There are known interactions of gefitinib with blood-thinning medicine such as warfarin. Ask your doctor what precautions you should take.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any of these symptoms and/or any new or unusual symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
- Chills
- Blurred vision or other changes in eyesight
- Red, painful, teary, or crusty eye
- Dry eye
- Sensitivity to light
- Pain in your chest
- Dry cough
- Wheezing and/or trouble breathing
- Severe pain in your abdomen that does not go away
- Difficulty swallowing
- Nausea that stops you from eating or drinking and/or is not relieved by prescribed medicine
- Throwing up more than 3 times a day
- Diarrhea, 4 times in one day or diarrhea with lack of strength or a feeling of being dizzy
- Flu-like symptoms: fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, and fatigue (low energy, feeling weak)
- A new rash and/or itching that is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Dry skin that is bothersome
- Signs of possible liver problems: dark urine, pale bowel movements, pain in your abdomen, feeling very tired and weak, unusual itching, or yellowing of the eyes or skin
- If you think you may be pregnant

Reproduction Warnings

- **Pregnancy warning:** This medicine can have harmful effects on the unborn baby. Women of childbearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment and for at least 2 weeks after stopping treatment. Let your doctor know right away if you think you may be pregnant.
- **Breastfeeding warning:** Women should not breastfeed during treatment because this medicine could enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** In women, this medicine may affect your ability to have children in the future. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children. Ask for information on egg banking.

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