

Erlotinib (Tarceva)

About This Medicine

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

Possible Side Effects

- Nausea and vomiting (throwing up)
- Diarrhea (loose bowel movements)
- Tiredness
- Decreased appetite (decreased hunger)
- Cough
- Trouble breathing
- Rash

Note: Each of the side effects above was reported in 20% or greater of patients treated with erlotinib. 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 drugs in combination. Please discuss any concerns or questions with your medical team.

Warnings and Precautions

- Scarring of the lungs that causes stiffness in the lungs which makes breathing difficult and can be life-threatening.
- Changes in your kidney function, which can cause kidney failure and be life-threatening.
- Severe changes in your liver function, which can cause liver failure and be life-threatening.
- Perforation - an abnormal hole in your stomach, small and/or large intestine which can be life-threatening.
- Severe skin reactions, which can be life-threatening. 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, and which sometimes can peel off. You may develop dry skin or darkening of the skin, or changes to the color of your skin.
- Anemia (decreased red blood cells) due to the breakdown of your red blood cells
- Increased risk of a stroke in patients with pancreatic cancer which can be life-threatening.
- Changes in eyesight such as eye irritation, decreased tears, risk of developing small tears (perforation) of the cornea, and/or sensitivity to light.

- Erlotinib may interact with blood thinning medicines such as warfarin, which may increase your risk of bleeding which can be life-threatening. Symptoms may be coughing up blood, throwing up blood (may look like coffee grounds), red or black tarry bowel movements, abnormally heavy menstrual flow, nosebleeds or any other unusual bleeding.

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

Important Information

- Talk to your doctor and/or nurse if you smoke or have any changes in your smoking habit while taking erlotinib as this may lower the levels of the medicine in your body, which can make it less effective. It is highly recommended to quit smoking while taking erlotinib.

How to Take Your Medicine

- Take this medicine by mouth without food, at least 1 hour before you eat or 2 hours after you eat.
- **Missed dose:** If you vomit or miss a dose, contact your doctor for further instructions. Do not take 2 doses at the same time and do not double up on the next dose.
- **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 throw up or 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).
- If you have diarrhea, 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.
- To help with nausea and vomiting, eat small, frequent meals instead of three large meals a day. Choose foods and drinks that are at room temperature. Ask your nurse or doctor about other helpful tips and medicine that is available to help stop or lessen these symptoms.
- Manage tiredness by pacing your activities for the day. Be sure to include periods of rest between energy-draining activities.



- To help with decreased appetite, eat small, frequent meals. Eat foods high in calories and protein, such as meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, tofu, eggs, nuts, milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream, pudding, and nutritional supplements.
- Consider using sauces and spices to increase taste. Daily exercise, with your doctor's approval, may increase your appetite.
- 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.
- Keeping your nails moisturized may help with brittleness.
- Moisturize your skin several times a day.
- Avoid sun exposure and apply sunscreen routinely when you are outdoors, even for a short time. Cover up when you are out in the sun. Wear wide-brimmed hats, long-sleeved shirts, and pants. Keep your neck, chest, and back covered.

Food and Medicine Interactions

- Avoid grapefruit or grapefruit juice while taking this medicine as it may raise the levels of erlotinib in your body which could make side effects worse.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist about all other prescription medicines and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, and others) you are taking before starting this medicine as there are known medicine interactions with erlotinib. Also, check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new prescription or over-the-counter medicines, or dietary supplements to make sure that there are no interactions.
- Avoid the use of St. John's Wort and cigarette smoking while taking erlotinib as this 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 erlotinib. Call your doctor to find out what medicine you may take with erlotinib to help with heartburn or stomach upset.
- There are known interactions of erlotinib 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
- Tiredness that interferes with your daily activities
- Blurred vision or other changes in eyesight
- Red or painful eye
- Teary eye
- Sensitivity to light
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Symptoms of a stroke such as sudden numbness or weakness of your face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of your body; sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding; sudden trouble



seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, feeling dizzy, loss of balance or coordination; or sudden bad headache with no known cause. **If you have any of these symptoms for 2 minutes, call 911.**

- Pain in your chest
- Dry cough and/or a cough that is bothersome
- Wheezing and/or trouble breathing
- Nausea that stops you from eating or drinking and/or is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- 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
- Lasting loss of appetite or rapid weight loss of five pounds in a week
- Severe pain in your abdomen that does not go away
- Trouble swallowing
- Signs of abnormal bleeding such as coughing up blood, throwing up blood (may look like coffee grounds), easy bleeding or bruising, red or black tarry bowel movements, abnormally heavy menstrual flow, nosebleeds, or any other unusual bleeding
- Decreased or very dark urine
- 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
- Flu-like symptoms: fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, and fatigue (low energy, feeling weak)
- New rash and/or itching or a rash that is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Signs of inflammation/infection (redness, swelling, pain) of the tissue around your nails
- 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 1 month after stopping treatment. Let your doctor know right away if you think you may be pregnant.
- **Breastfeeding warning:** Women should not breastfeed during treatment and for 2 weeks after stopping treatment because this medicine could enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** Fertility studies have not been done with this medicine. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children. Ask for information on sperm or egg banking.

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