Imatinib (Gleevec®)  
("eye MAT eh nib")

How drug is given: by mouth

Purpose: stops growth of cancer cells in leukemia, gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GIST), and other cancers

How to take the drug by mouth

• Take with a meal and a large glass of water/apple juice.

• Swallow each tablet whole; do not crush or chew them. If you are unable to swallow the tablet, the pharmacist will give you specific instructions.

• If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular dosing schedule. Do not double dose.

• Imatinib can interfere with many drugs, which may change how this works in your body. Talk with your doctor before starting any new drugs, including over-the-counter drugs, natural products, herbals or vitamins.

• Do not drink grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit. Side effects may be worse.

Storage

• Store this medicine at room temperature, away from heat and moisture. Keep this medicine in its original container, out of the reach of children and pets.

Things that may occur during treatment

1. Skin changes such as dryness or a rash on your body may occur. Ask your doctor or nurse what lotions or creams you may use.

2. Loose stools or diarrhea may occur. You may take loperamide (Imodium A-D®) to help control diarrhea. You may buy this at most drug stores. It is also important to drink more fluids (water, juice, sports drinks). If these do not help, talk to your doctor or nurse.
3. Mild constipation may occur after treatment begins. Please increase your fluid intake and increase fiber in your diet by eating fresh fruits and vegetables. A daily stool softener, such as docusate (Colace®) or Miralax®, may be helpful. If these do not help within 48 hours, tell your doctor or nurse. Avoid bulk forming laxatives such as Metamucil®.

4. You may get a headache. Please talk to your doctor or nurse about what you can take for this.

5. Mild to moderate nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and/or stomach pain may occur. Drugs to help with this may be given to you.

6. Your body may not be able to get rid of extra fluid. This is called edema. You may notice some swelling around your eyes and in your arms or legs.

7. Your blood cell counts may drop. This is known as bone marrow suppression. This includes a decrease in your:
   - Red blood cells, which carry oxygen in your body to help give you energy
   - White blood cells, which fight infection in your body
   - Platelets, which help clot the blood to stop bleeding

   If you have a fever of 100.5°F (39°C) or higher, chills, a cough, or any bleeding problems, **tell your doctor or nurse right away.**

8. Some patients may feel very weak or tired, also known as fatigue. You may need to rest or take naps more often. Mild to moderate exercise can also be helpful in maintaining your energy. Talk with your doctor or nurse.

9. You may have a fast or unusual heartbeat. If you feel any strange changes in your heartbeat, **tell your doctor or nurse right away.**

10. You may get some hair thinning.

11. You may have some muscle cramping, aching or joint or bone pain. If these occur, your doctor may suggest taking some mild pain medication.

12. It is very important to use birth control if you are having sex, because this drug could be harmful to an unborn baby. Women should not breast-feed while receiving imatinib. If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your doctor or nurse.

The above information includes some, but not necessarily all, of the possible side effects of this medication. The side effects in this teaching sheet may not be the same ones you experience. Your side effects may be different, depending on how often you receive treatment (your schedule) and how much you receive each time (your dosage). Side effects may also vary if you take other medications. Please talk with your doctor or nurse if you have questions about possible side effects you may experience. This document should not take the place of conversations with members of your health care team.
If you experience any significant change in your health during or after treatment, contact a member of your health care team right away.

Managing your oral chemotherapy schedule at home can be challenging. To help you with this, consider using tools to help you keep track of your schedule and any side effects you may have. You can find these tools online at www.dana-farber.org/OralChemoDiary.

THIS SPACE RESERVED FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS OR NOTES FOR THE PATIENT AND FAMILY: