



## Erlotinib (Tarceva®)

("er-LOE-tye-nib")

**How drug is given:** by mouth

**Purpose:** stops growth of cancer cells in lung, pancreatic and other cancers

### How to take the drug by mouth

- Take dose at least 1 hour before food or at least 2 hours after food.
- Swallow each tablet whole; do not chew. If you have trouble swallowing 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.**
- Erlotinib 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, herbal supplements, and vitamins.
- Avoid using drugs that decrease the acid in your stomach, if possible, as they may change how this drug is absorbed in your body. Examples include the proton pump inhibitors omeprazole (Prilosec®), lansoprazole (Prevacid®), and esomeprazole (Nexium®); H2 antagonists such as ranitidine (Zantac®), famotidine (Pepcid®), and cimetidine (Tagamet®); and antacids such as Tums®.
  - You may take with one of the H2 receptor antagonists only if you take erlotinib 10 hours after the H2 antagonist or at least 2 hours before the H2 antagonist.
  - If using an antacid, separate the dosing by several hours.
- Erlotinib can interact with warfarin (Coumadin®). You will need to have your INR tested more frequently.
- Do not drink **grapefruit juice** or eat **grapefruit**. Side effects may be worse.
- Wash your hands after taking the medication. Avoid handling crushed or broken tablets.

## Storage

- Store at room temperature, away from heat and moisture.
- Keep this medicine in its original container, out of reach of children and pets.
- If you have unused oral chemotherapy pills (tablets or capsules), please return them to the pharmacy where the prescription was filled.
- Do not flush down the toilet, dump in the sink, or throw away in the trash.

## Things that may occur during treatment

1. Skin changes, such as redness or a rash (sometimes looks like acne), may occur. This will most likely appear on your face, chest, or back. It may be itchy, inflamed, and could become infected. If any skin changes occur, please discuss with your cancer care team. There are drugs that can help with the skin changes. Stay out of the sun and do not use over-the-counter acne products.
  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, tell your cancer care team.
  3. Mild to moderate nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and/or stomach pain may occur. Drugs to help with this may be given to you.
  4. 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 cancer care team.
  5. You may get a fever even when you do not have an infection. Your muscles may ache or be tired. Please discuss treatment options with your cancer care team.
  6. Rarely, your liver may be affected by this drug. In such cases, the skin might turn yellow and a yellow coloring may be seen in the whites of your eyes. You may have pain in your right side. You may feel more tired. If you have any of these symptoms, please tell your cancer care team **right away**.
  7. Rarely, problems with your lungs could occur. If you have new onset of difficulty breathing, cough, or fever please call your cancer care team **right away**.
- Fertility and Related Precautions:
    - It is very important to use birth control if you are having sex, because this drug may be harmful to an unborn baby.
    - Women should not breast-feed while receiving this drug.
    - If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your cancer care team.

*The above information includes some, but not necessarily all, of the possible side effects of this medication. The side effects listed 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 are taking other medications. Please speak with your cancer care team if you have questions about possible side effects you may experience. This document should not take the place of conversations with members of your cancer care team. If you experience any significant change in your health during or after treatment, contact a member of your cancer 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](http://www.dana-farber.org/OralChemoDiary).

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