



Chemotherapy: Gefitinib (Iressa®)

Pronounced: "geh-FIH-tih-nib"

How drug is given: By mouth

Purpose: To treat certain lung cancers

How to take this drug

- This medication can be taken with or without food.
- If you have difficulty swallowing this medicine, you can dissolve the tablets by putting them in a glass with 4 to 8 ounces of water and stirring for 15 minutes. Drink immediately. Refill the glass with another 4 to 8 ounces of water and drink immediately.
- Do not drink grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit. Also, do not take St. John's wort. Taking these may increase the amount of medication in your body and worsen side effects.
- Gefitinib can interact with warfarin (Coumadin®). To watch for this, your cancer care team may have you take blood tests that check your international normalized ratio (INR).
- Gefitinib can interfere with many drugs, which may change how this works in your body. Talk with your cancer care team before starting any new medicines or supplements, including over-the-counter drugs, natural products, herbal supplements, and vitamins.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is less than 12 hours until your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your regular dose at the usual time. **Do not double dose.**
- Wash your hands after taking the medicine. 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, 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

- Skin changes may occur, such as redness or a rash (like acne). This will most likely appear on your face, chest, or back. It may be itchy, inflamed, and become infected. If you have any skin changes, talk with your doctor or nurse. There are drugs that can help. Stay

out of the sun and do not use over-the-counter acne products.

- Loose stools or diarrhea may occur within a few days after the drug is started. You may take loperamide (Imodium A-D®) to help control diarrhea. You can buy this at most drug stores. Be sure to also drink more fluids (water, juice, sports drinks). If these do not help within 24 hours, **call your cancer care team.**
- Your liver may be affected by this medicine. On occasion, blood work will be taken to monitor your liver function.
- Mild to moderate nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite may occur. You may be given medicine to help with this.
- Your breathing can be affected by this medicine. If you feel short of breath, have a new dry cough, feel chest discomfort, generally tired or fatigued. Speak with your cancer care team.
- You may be at increased risk for bleeding. Call your doctor if you have any of these symptoms:
 - You see blood in your urine or stool
 - You feel dizzy or faint
 - You have a nosebleed that does not stop in 10-15 minutes
 - If you have a nosebleed, sit with your head tipped slightly forward and apply pressure by lightly pinching the soft part of your nose for a full 10 minutes. Applying ice to the bridge of the nose can also help.

Things that may occur after treatment ends (even months to years later)

Sexual health and fertility concerns

- If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your cancer care team.
- It is not safe to take this medicine during pregnancy. It could harm an unborn baby.

Women

- To keep from getting pregnant, use a barrier form of effective birth control and keep using it for at least 2 weeks after you stop treatment.
- Barrier methods of birth control prevent the sperm from reaching the egg. Discuss with your cancer team which type of barrier method is best for you. Some barrier methods are cervical caps, female/male condoms, and diaphragms with spermicides. Some are available over-the-counter; others must be prescribed.
- Women should not breast-feed while receiving this medicine.

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.

The information in this document includes some, but not necessarily all, of the possible side effects of this medication. The side effects listed here 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.



Oral chemotherapy medicines are given by mouth in the form of capsules, tablets, or liquid. These safety tips will help you understand what to do when you are taking oral chemotherapy. **Please note:** If you are on a clinical trial, you may be given special instructions.

How to take this drug

- Swallow each tablet or capsule whole. Do not break, crush, or chew.
- Prepare your drug away from food and food prep areas.
- 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 the dose.
- If you are on a clinical trial, you will be given special instructions if you miss a dose.
- If you are unable to swallow the pill, speak with your nurse or pharmacist about other ways to take your medication.
- If you vomit or throw up your medication, call your physician for further instructions.
- Wash your hands after taking the medication. Avoid handling crushed or broken pills (tablets or capsules).

Storage

- Most oral chemotherapy medicine is stored at room temperature, away from excess heat and moisture. You will be told if the medication you are taking needs special storage or handling.
- Keep this medicine in its original container, in a safe place, away from other family medications. All medications need to be kept out of the reach of children and pets.

Disposal

- 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.

Safe handling of body waste in the home after chemotherapy

- Chemotherapy stays in the body for hours or even days, and is found in vomit, urine, stool, and sweat (body wastes). Special care must be taken to prevent the patient's body waste from coming into accidental contact with the patient or caregiver.

Body wastes

Patient and caregiver:

- You can use the toilet (septic tank or city sewage) as usual. There is no research to support double flushing to prevent accidental contact (although this may be suggested for certain medications). Ask your doctor or nurse what they suggest for your medication.
- Wash your hands well with soap and water after using the toilet. If urine, vomit, or stool gets on your body, wash with soap and water. Always wear gloves when cleaning equipment or disposing waste from a urinal or commode.
- Pregnant caregivers should **not** handle patient body waste.
- It is safe for family and friends to use the same toilet, as long as all body waste is cleaned from the toilet.
- To absorb urine or stool, use a disposable, plastic-backed pad, diaper, or sheet. Change it immediately when soiled. Then wash skin with soap and water.
- If you have an ostomy, you or your caregiver may want to wear gloves when emptying or changing appliances.

Laundry

- Always wear disposable gloves when handling sheets or clothes that have been soiled with body waste.
- Soiled items should be kept and washed separately from the other laundry.

Oral chemotherapy is a serious drug that requires extra caution. If you have questions or concerns about your oral chemotherapy, do not hesitate to call your clinician. For more tips, tools and short videos to help you manage oral chemotherapy visit our web page at <http://www.dana-farber.org/oralchemo>