



Chemotherapy: Imatinib (Gleevec®)

Pronounced: *"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.
- Swallow each tablet whole. Do not crush or 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.
- Imatinib can interfere with many drugs, which may change how this works in your body. Talk with your cancer care team before starting any new drugs, including over-the-counter drugs, natural products, herbal supplements, and vitamins.
- Do not drink grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit. Consuming these may increase the amount of medication in your body and worsen side effects.
- Wash 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 pills (tablets or capsules), please return them to the pharmacy where the prescription was filled. Do not flush them down the toilet, dump in the sink, or throw away in the trash.

Things that may occur during treatment:

- Skin changes, such as dryness or a rash on your body, may occur. Ask your cancer care team what lotions or creams you may use.
- Loose stools or diarrhea may occur. You may take loperamide (Imodium A-D®) to help control diarrhea. You can buy this at most drug stores. Be sure to drink more fluids (water, juice, sports drinks). If these do not help within 24 hours, call your cancer care team.

- Mild constipation may occur after treatment begins. Be sure to drink more fluids and get more fiber in your diet by eating fresh fruits and vegetables. A daily stool softener, such as docusate (Colace®), and/or laxatives, such as senna (Senakot®), may be helpful. If these do not help within 48 hours, tell your cancer care team. Do not use bulk forming laxatives such as Metamucil® without first talking with your cancer care team.
- You may get a headache. Please talk to your cancer care team about what you can take for this.
- Mild to moderate nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and/or stomach pain may occur. You may be given medicine to help with this.
- 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.
- Your blood cell counts may drop. This is known as bone marrow suppression. This includes a decrease in:
 - 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 (38°C) or higher**, chills, a cough, or any bleeding problems, **call your cancer care team right away.**

- You may have an increased risk of bleeding. **Call your cancer care team right away** if you feel new or sudden dizziness, lightheadedness, or feel like you are passing out.
- 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.
- You may have a fast or unusual heartbeat. If you feel any strange changes in your heartbeat, **tell your cancer care team right away.**
- You may get some hair thinning.
- You may feel pain or weakness in your joints or muscles. If these bother you, ask your cancer care team what type of drugs you may use to help with this pain.
- Your liver may be affected by this medicine. On occasion, blood work will be taken to monitor your liver function.
- Your kidneys could be hurt by this drug and not work as well. Your cancer team will monitor your kidneys with blood and urine tests.

Sexual health and fertility

- 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 and for 1 month after you stop treatment.

Managing your oral chemotherapy schedule at home can be challenging. To help 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>