

## PHARMACY

Drug Information

# Cetuximab (Erbix®) Injection



### What is Cetuximab?

- Cetuximab is usually used alone or in combination with other drugs to treat colorectal cancer and head and neck cancer.

### How is Cetuximab Administered?

- Cetuximab is usually given by injection into a vein (an intravenous infusion) over one to two hours.

### Can Cetuximab be Administered With Other Medications?

- Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications, including Traditional Chinese Medicines, Jamu medicine or supplements.

### What are the Important Side Effects of Cetuximab?

- Infusion related reactions  
These are usually mild or moderate, but rarely, they can be more severe. You may be given drugs before the infusion to reduce the chance of a reaction happening.

If you do have a reaction, this can usually be treated by slowing or stopping the drip until the reaction is over. Any future infusions will be given at a slower rate.

*Inform the nurses immediately during infusion of Cetuximab if you experience the following:*

- Flu-like symptoms, such as headache, feeling flushed, having a fever, chills or dizziness
- Red, warm and itchy bumps on the skin
- Swelling in the lips, tongue or throat
- Breathlessness, wheezing, a cough or sudden difficulty breathing
- Chest tightness or chest pain

- Medications prescribed by your doctor should be beneficial for your condition even though they may result in some inevitable side effects.

| Side Effect  | Management  |
|--|---|
| Acne-like rashes may appear on the face, upper chest and back usually within three weeks after starting treatment and go away completely when the treatment stops. Skin on the face may also become flaky and scaly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid direct sunlight and applying sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 30 may help. Alternatively, wear a hat, long sleeves, and long pants outside on sunny days.</li> <li>• Applying moisturizers to dry areas may help.</li> </ul>                                      |
| Nail changes, inflammation of the skin surrounding a fingernail or toenail may occur   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mild pain can be relieved by taking Paracetamol (Panadol ®). Inform your doctor if pain is not controlled by Paracetamol (Panadol ®). Avoid Paracetamol (Panadol ®) when you are having fever.</li> <li>• If you get pain, redness or swelling around your nails, inform your doctor.</li> </ul> |
| Nausea or vomiting   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take small, frequent meals.</li> <li>• Avoid smells that precipitate nausea.</li> <li>• Take medicines for nausea or vomiting prescribed by your doctor.</li> <li>• Avoid tight-fitting clothes around the waist.</li> </ul>   |
| Diarrhoea  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform your doctor if this is severe and/or does not improve with medicine use.</li> <li>• Drink at least two litres (8 cups) of fluids every day when you are having diarrhoea.</li> </ul>  |

| Side Effect                          | Management  |
|--------------------------------------|---|
|                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid milk or dairy products and/or high fibre food whilst you are having diarrhoea.</li> </ul>  |
| Reduced levels of magnesium in blood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular blood test is required to monitor magnesium levels in your blood and supplementation may be given if required.</li> </ul>  |
| Tiredness and lack of energy         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid driving or operating machinery if you are feeling tired.</li> </ul>  |
| Heart problems                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please proceed to the A &amp; E department immediately if you experience signs of heart problems such as shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chest pain, fast heart beat or sudden swelling of legs.</li> </ul> |

If you develop rashes, facial swelling or shortness of breath after taking the medication, you could be allergic to the medication. Please seek medical attention immediately.

#### Are There any Special Precautions That I Need to Take?

- It is important to inform your doctor if you intend to conceive or breastfeed while taking this medication.
- You must not become pregnant during treatment with Cetuximab and must use an effective method of contraception. You should take appropriate contraceptive measures during and up to 2 months after cessation of treatment. If pregnancy occurs during your treatment, you must inform your doctor immediately.
- Cetuximab may have an anti-fertility effect, which could be irreversible. You should discuss with your doctor regarding fertility preservation prior to starting treatment.
- You should not breast-feed during treatment.

## What Else can I do to Help My Condition?

- Exercise  
Light exercise is recommended as it helps to improve mobility, balance and even emotional well-being. Do avoid strenuous exercise, and rest when you are feeling tired.
- Stay positive  
Understand your condition and take an active role in managing it. Do not be afraid to talk about it with your doctor/ pharmacist/ family members. Repressed feelings can be harmful to your immediate well-being and long-term health.
- Adequate hydration  
Maintain adequate hydration with two to three litres (8 to 12 cups) of fluids per day unless informed by your doctor to restrict fluids. This will decrease your chances of being constipated and also prevent dehydration.
- Medical and dental treatment  
If you need to go into hospital for any reason other than cancer, always inform the doctors and nurses that you are having chemotherapy. Talk to your cancer doctor if you think you need dental treatment. Always inform your dentist that you are having chemotherapy.

If you have any problem with your treatment, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician.

You can also find useful information with regards to your medication on this website: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support>

