

PHARMACY

Drug Information

Erlotinib (Tarceva®) Tablet



What is Erlotinib?

- Erlotinib is used to treat non-small cell lung and pancreatic cancer.

How is Erlotinib Taken?

- Erlotinib is taken orally once daily at the same time each day. Swallow them whole with a glass of water on an empty stomach, either one hour before or two hours after eating. Do not chew or crush the medications. Inform your doctor or pharmacist if you have difficulty swallowing.
- If possible, handle the medication yourself. If a family member or caregiver needs to give the medication, wash hands before and after handling the medication.
- If you miss a dose of Erlotinib, take it as soon as possible if it is within 12 hours of the missed dose. If it is more than 12 hours since your missed dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing times.
- If you vomit the dose of Erlotinib, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing times.
- Do not take extra doses to make up for the missed dose. Inform your doctor immediately for advice.

Can Erlotinib be Taken With Other Medications?

- Antacids should be separated from Erlotinib by at least two hours. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other drugs to reduce stomach acid such as Omeprazole (Losec®) or Ranitidine (Zantac®).
- You should not drink grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit during your treatment with Erlotinib. It may increase the amount of Erlotinib in your blood to a harmful level.
- 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 Erlotinib?

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

Side Effect	Management
Nausea or Vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small frequent meals or sucking hard, sugar-free candy may help. • Please remember to take the medications for nausea or vomiting as instructed by your doctor.
Diarrhoea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your doctor may prescribe medications to control diarrhoea. Inform your doctor if it is severe and/or does not improve with medication use. • Make sure you drink at least two litres (8 cups) of fluids every day when you are having diarrhoea. • Avoid milk or dairy products and/or high fibre food whilst you are having diarrhoea.
Mouth ulcers can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth or in the throat and this can lead to an infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a soft toothbrush. • Rinse and brush your dentures after eating and soak them in denture solution overnight. • Rinsing your mouth regularly with an alcohol-free mouth gargle or salt water may help reduce chances of infection.
Eye irritation or changes in eyesight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform your doctor if you develop worsening redness and pain in the eye, increased eye watering, blurred vision and/or sensitivity to light.
Fatigue or tiredness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid driving or operating machinery if you are feeling tired • Inform your doctor if fatigue is persistent or worsens.

Side Effect	Management
Acne-like rashes may appear on the face usually within two to three weeks after starting treatment and go away completely when the treatment stops. Your skin may also become flaky and scaly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Applying moisturisers to dry areas may help
Hair changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are less common, but sometimes develop after three months or more. Your eyelashes may grow longer and curlier. You may notice that your head and body hair is finer, curlier or more brittle. This usually develops gradually. All of these changes are usually temporary and will improve once treatment is stopped.

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 Erlotinib and must use an effective method of contraception. You should take appropriate contraceptive measures during and up to 6 months after cessation of treatment. If pregnancy occurs during your treatment, you must inform your doctor immediately.
- Erlotinib 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 2 to 3 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.

Please keep all medications out of reach of children.

You can also find useful information with regards to your medication on this website:

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support>

