

## PHARMACY

Drug Information

### Gefitinib (Iressa<sup>®</sup>) Tablet



#### What is Gefitinib?

- Gefitinib is used for the treatment of Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor (EGFR) positive non-small cell lung cancer.

#### How is Gefitinib Taken?

- Gefitinib is taken orally once daily, with or without food.
- 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.
- Swallow them whole with a glass of water, do not chew or crush the medications. Inform your doctor or pharmacist if you have difficulty swallowing. They may suggest that you disperse the Gefitinib tablets in water. In this case, dissolve a tablet in half glass of drinking water, stir with a spoon until the tablets are completely dissolved and then drink it immediately. It may take 15 minutes for it to disperse completely. Another 50 ml of water should be used to rinse the glass and then it should be swallowed to ensure that all of the drug has been taken. The glass and spoon should be washed and kept separate from your other crockery and cooking utensils.
- If you miss a dose of Gefitinib, 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 Gefitinib, 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 Gefitinib be Taken With Other Medications?

- Antacids should be separated from Gefitinib by at least 2 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 Gefitinib. It may increase the amount of Gefitinib in your blood to a harmful level.
- Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications, including Traditional Chinese Medicines, Jamu medicines or supplements.

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

- 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"> <li>• Small frequent meals or sucking hard, sugar-free candy may help.</li> <li>• Please remember to take the medications for nausea or vomiting as instructed by your doctor.</li> </ul>
Diarrhoea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your doctor may prescribe medications to control diarrhoea. Inform your doctor if it is severe and/or does not improve with medication use.</li> <li>• Make sure you drink at least two litres (8 cups) of fluids every day when you are having diarrhoea.</li> <li>• Avoid milk or dairy products and/or high fibre food whilst you are having diarrhoea.</li> </ul>
Skin reactions such as rash, dryness, or itchiness may be common	<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> <li>• Inform your doctor if skin reactions persist or get worse.</li> </ul>

Side Effect	Management
Changes in the way the liver works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please proceed to the A &amp; E department immediately if you experience any yellowing of eye white and skin or tea-coloured urine, pale stools or severe abdominal pain.</li> </ul>
Rarely interstitial lung disease may occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please proceed to the A &amp; E department immediately if you experience a sudden onset of shortness of breath, cough and/or fever while taking Gefitinib.</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 Gefitinib 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.
- Gefitinib 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.

## How do I Store Gefitinib?

- Store your medication in a cool, dry place away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight.

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>



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