

Patient Treatment Information

Erlotinib

Your treatment is called erlotinib (er-LOT-tye-nib) or Tarceva (tar-SEA-va). It is commonly used to treat non-small cell lung cancer and pancreatic cancer. It has also been used to treat other diseases. Erlotinib is a new type of drug that targets cancer cells more precisely than chemotherapy drugs. It works by inhibiting a protein called tyrosine kinase, which is associated with a receptor called the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR). By blocking this tyrosine kinase, erlotinib prevents further growth of cancer cells and causes tumor cell death.

What Do I Need to Know Before Starting Treatment?

Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about any prescription or over-the-counter products you are taking, including dietary supplements, vitamins, herbal medicines and homeopathic remedies.

Use an effective birth control method while you are being treated. Erlotinib can cause harm to a fetus, so be sure to tell your healthcare provider right away if you or your partner become pregnant.

Avoid breastfeeding during treatment. It is not known if erlotinib passes into breast milk.

Some cancer treatments can cause sterility. Talk with your healthcare provider about your options if you want to have children in the future.

Do not get any immunizations or vaccinations while you are being treated without the approval of your healthcare provider.

What Do I Need to Know Before Starting Erlotinib?

Erlotinib can rarely cause a serious lung condition called interstitial lung disease (ILD). Symptoms of this condition can include shortness of breath, cough, or fever. Let your healthcare provider know if you have a lung condition before starting this medication. In addition, if you develop any of these symptoms, contact your doctor right away.

Erlotinib can affect your liver and its ability to function properly. Your healthcare provider will check your liver function regularly through blood tests to make sure that it is working properly.

Erlotinib can affect your kidney and its ability to function properly. Your healthcare provider will check your kidney function regularly through blood tests to make sure that it is working properly.

Erlotinib has been associated with certain eye problems, including conjunctivitis, keratitis and corneal ulcerations, which can cause vision problems.

Rarely, erlotinib has been associated with heart attack and stroke, particularly in patients with pancreatic cancer. Talk with your healthcare provider about this potential problem.

Rarely, erlotinib has been associated with microangiopathic hemolytic anemia with thrombocytopenia. Talk with your healthcare provider about this potential problem.

Erlotinib may increase your chance of bleeding. Talk with your healthcare provider about this potential problem.

Your treatment can interact with other substances, including:

- Drugs used to treat TB and other infections, such as rifampin or rifabutin
- Drugs used to treat seizures, such as phenytoin, phenobarbital and carbamazepine
- Steroids, such as dexamethasone
- St. John's Wort
- Drugs used to treat fungal infections, such as ketoconazole, fluconazole, voriconazole or itraconazole
- Antibiotics, such as clarithromycin and erythromycin
- Grapefruit and grapefruit juice
- Drugs used to treat HIV, such as ritonavir, delavirdine, atazanavir, indinavir, saquinavir and efavirenz
- Drugs used to treat depression, such as nefazodone
- Warfarin (Coumadin)

You should **not** take this treatment if you are allergic to erlotinib or any of its components.

How Is the Treatment Given?

Most people take erlotinib once a day. The dose may be different depending upon your diagnosis. Try to take erlotinib on an empty stomach; one hour before a meal or two hours after a meal. Tablets should be swallowed whole. If you miss a dose, skip it and take the next dose as scheduled.

It is important to take erlotinib exactly as prescribed. Do not stop the medicine or change the dose without talking with your healthcare provider.

Store erlotinib at room temperature away from children and pets. If you take too much erlotinib, contact your healthcare provider, local poison control center or emergency room right away.

What Are the Important Side Effects?

All drugs can cause side effects, but every person reacts differently to each drug. The following chart lists important side effects that can occur with your treatment, how often the side effect occurs (common, less common or rare), how to recognize and minimize side effects and possible treatments. Call your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about side effects.

Potential Side Effects	How to Minimize Side Effects	Possible Treatments
Nausea/Vomiting (Common) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling queasy or sick to your stomach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat small, frequent meals and bland foods—such as bananas, rice, applesauce and toast. • Eat food cold or at room temperature so the smell of food will not bother you. • Avoid fried, spicy or fatty foods. • Eat and drink slowly. • Drink plenty of liquids during the day, but to avoid bloating, do not drink during meals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be given medicine to help reduce nausea and vomiting.
Diarrhea (Common) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loose or watery stools several times a day • Abdominal cramping, gas and bloating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat small, frequent meals and bland foods—such as bananas, rice, applesauce and toast. • Avoid caffeine; alcohol; raw fruits and vegetables; raw eggs; undercooked meats; spicy, fatty and greasy foods; milk and dairy products; foods that cause gas, such as beans and other legumes; high fiber and high-fat foods; foods left un-refrigerated for more than two hours (one hour for egg dishes and cream or mayonnaise-based foods); bulk laxatives; and stool softeners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink eight to ten glasses of clear liquids every day. • Your healthcare provider may prescribe medicine to help treat diarrhea.

Potential Side Effects	How to Minimize Side Effects	Possible Treatments
<p>Anorexia or Appetite Loss (Common)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not having an appetite • Feeling too nauseous to eat • Metallic or medicinal taste • Change in taste causing dislike for certain foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try eating six to eight small meals or snacks each day instead of three larger meals. • Vary your diet and try new foods and recipes. • Take a walk before meals, when possible. This may make you feel hungrier. • Eat with friends or family. When eating alone, listen to the radio or watch TV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook dinners ahead of time and freeze them in small portions so that cooking smells are minimized. • Let others help with food, but ask that foods be prepared in small portions that can be frozen. And don't hesitate to let them know which foods to avoid. • Add mild spices to change flavor. • It might be helpful to have a program, such as Meals on Wheels, deliver food to you.
<p>Rash (Common)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acne-like rash on the upper body or head • Dry skin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a mild soap to wash the affected area. • Moisturize the area with a mild alcohol-free cream. • Avoid sun exposure. • Use a sunscreen of SPF15 or higher, preferably containing zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. • Wear a hat. • Avoid over-the-counter acne-related treatments, including products with benzoyl peroxide. • Remove any dermatologist-approved makeup with a gentle liquid cleanser. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your doctor may prescribe creams or other topical medications (antibacterial or steroid) to help manage the rash. • Your healthcare provider may decrease your drug dose or delay further treatment.
<p>Constipation (Common)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in passing stools • Decrease in the normal frequency of bowel movements • Small, hard dry stools • Bloating, gas, cramps and pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of fluids to help loosen your bowels. Drink warm or hot liquids if you do not have mouth sores. • Your healthcare provider may suggest eating foods that are high in fiber, such as bran, vegetables, whole wheat breads and fruit. Add prunes or prune juice, which act like laxatives. • Exercise can help loosen bowels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your healthcare provider may recommend a stool softener.
<p>Infection (Less Common)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever and chills • Painful urination • Sore throat and cough • Nasal congestion • Swelling or redness of the skin at the site of a wound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often. • Brush and floss your teeth daily. • Clean cuts right away with warm water, soap and antiseptic. • When your white blood cell count is low, stay away from crowds and people with colds or other illnesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may be given medicine to increase your white blood cell count. • You may be given an antibiotic to treat or prevent infection. • Your healthcare provider may decrease your drug dose or delay further treatment.
<p>Mouth Sores and Pain (Less Common)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain, swelling and redness of the mouth, tongue and throat • "Coated tongue" • Difficulty talking, swallowing or eating • Bleeding ulcers and infection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush teeth two to four times a day using a soft bristle brush and fluoride toothpaste. • Use non-waxed dental floss daily. • Ask your healthcare provider to recommend a mouthwash that does not contain alcohol. • Sip water during the day and use sugar-free candy or gum to keep your mouth wet. • Eat food cold or at room temperature. • Eat soft or pureed food. • Avoid food that is acidic, spicy, salty, dry or rough, such as toast. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may be given medicine to help treat pain. • You may be given medicine to treat fungal or viral infections.

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