

Patient Treatment Information

Imatinib

Your treatment is called imatinib (i-MAT-in-ib) or Gleevec (GLEE-veck). It is commonly used to treat chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML), acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS), gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GIST) and has also been used to treat other diseases. Imatinib is a new type of drug that targets cancer cells more precisely than chemotherapy drugs. Imatinib works by specifically blocking an abnormal protein called the Bcr-Abl tyrosine kinase, which is responsible for the growth and increased number of abnormal white blood cells associated with CML.

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. Imatinib 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 imatinib passes into breast milk.

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 Imatinib?

Imatinib can cause stomach irritation. It should be taken with food and a large glass of water to minimize this problem.

Imatinib commonly causes fluid retention. Tell your healthcare provider if you gain weight or develop swelling around the eyes, face, lower legs, hands and abdomen. You may be given a diuretic, a drug that can help to reduce fluid in the body.

Imatinib commonly causes mild muscle cramps. Your healthcare provider may recommend that you take calcium supplements.

Rash is a common side effect of imatinib. Tell your healthcare provider if you develop red patches, blistering or itchiness. You may need to take an antihistamine or use a topical corticosteroid to reduce the symptoms.

In rare cases, imatinib can cause severe liver damage. Tell your healthcare provider if you have had liver problems in the past. Your healthcare provider will monitor your liver function with blood tests.

Heart failure is a rare but serious side effect of imatinib. Elderly patients and patients with a history of heart disease are more likely to develop this problem. Tell your healthcare provider if you have had heart problems in the past.

Imatinib may temporarily reduce the number of platelets in your blood which can increase your risk of bleeding. If your platelets become too low, your healthcare provider may delay your treatment or recommend a platelet transfusion.

Imatinib can interact with other medicines, including:

- Drugs used to treat fungal infections, such as ketoconazole, fluconazole or itraconazole
- Cimetidine (Tagamet)
- Calcium channel blockers, such as diltiazem, verapamil or nifedipine
- St. John's Wort
- Drugs used to treat seizures, such as phenytoin (Dilantin), phenobarbital or carbamazepine (Tegretol)
- Drugs used to treat TB and other infections, such as rifampin or rifabutin
- "Statin" drugs used to lower cholesterol, such as simvastatin, atorvastatin and lovastatin

- Warfarin (Coumadin)
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Beta-blockers, such as propranolol, metoprolol and atenolol
- Hormonal contraceptives
- Narcotic pain relievers, such as codeine, hydrocodone, oxycodone and meperidine
- Some sedatives, sleeping pills, tranquilizers, antidepressants and drugs used to treat anxiety

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

How Is the Treatment Given?

Imatinib is usually taken once or twice a day. Try to take your medicine around the same time each day. Follow your healthcare provider's directions if you are given a different dosing schedule. Imatinib should be taken with a meal and a large glass of water.

It is important to take imatinib exactly as prescribed. If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. If it is almost time for the next dose, then skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. You should not take a double dose to make up for the missed dose.

Do not stop the medicine or change the dose on your own without talking to your healthcare provider.

Store imatinib at room temperature away from children and pets. If you take too much imatinib, 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.
Anemia (Common) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue or weakness • Dizziness • Pale skin • Feeling out of breath • Feeling cold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan rest periods throughout the day. • Organize daily activities so that you conserve your energy. • Try to eat a well balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids. • Stand up slowly to avoid getting dizzy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may be given medicine to increase your red blood cell count. • Your healthcare provider may decrease your chemotherapy dose or delay further chemotherapy.

Potential Side Effects	How to Minimize Side Effects	Possible Treatments
<p>Rash (Common)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually mild and short lived • Generally appears on the arms and trunk (occasionally on the face) • May be itchy • May appear as a flat discolored area of the skin, or as a small raised bump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid prolonged exposure to heat or pressure. • Use creams or moisturizers regularly. Try covering your hands with cotton gloves. • Avoid perfume, cologne or aftershave since these products can be irritating to the skin. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your doctor may prescribe creams (mild steroids, anti-histamines, antibiotics) to help treat the rash • The rash may also improve without the need for any treatment
<p>Bleeding (Common)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unusual bleeding, easy bruising • Black or tar-like stools • Blood in your urine • Pinpoint red spots on your skin • Bleeding gums or nosebleeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid aspirin and aspirin-like drugs, such as ibuprofen. • Use caution with sharp objects, such as razors and nail cutters. • Avoid activities that can cause cuts, bumps and bruises. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your platelets get too low, you may be given a platelet transfusion. • Your healthcare provider may decrease your dose or delay further therapy.
<p>Infection (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 dose or delay further treatment.
<p>Fluid Retention (Common)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swelling around the eyes, lower legs, ankles, feet and abdominal area. • Rapid weight gain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check weight regularly for fluid retention. • Minimize the intake of salt containing foods which can cause fluid retention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may be given a diuretic (water pill) to reduce the amount of fluid in your body • Your doctor may stop your medication temporarily or reduce the dose.
<p>Anorexia or Appetite Loss (Less 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>Constipation (Less 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.

Disclaimer. The drug information presented is time-sensitive and current as of the date stated below. It is not a substitute for the expertise, skill, knowledge and judgment of healthcare practitioners. Additional, important information about this product, including “black box” warnings and precautions, is available from the manufacturer and other sources. ONMARK PROVIDES THIS DRUG INFORMATION ON AN “AS IS” BASIS. ALL WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE ARE DISCLAIMED.

Limitation of Liability. Onmark shall not be liable for any improper or incorrect use of the information described and contained herein and assumes no responsibility for anyone’s use of the information. IN NO EVENT SHALL ONMARK BE LIABLE FOR ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, INCIDENTAL, SPECIAL, EXEMPLARY, OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, PROCUREMENT OR SUBSTITUTE GOODS OR SERVICES; LOSS OF USE, DATA OR PROFITS; OR BUSINESS INTERRUPTION) HOWEVER CAUSED AND ON ANY THEORY OF LIABILITY, WHETHER IN CONTRACT, STRICT LIABILITY, OR TORT (INCLUDING NEGLIGENCE OR OTHERWISE) ARISING IN ANY WAY OUT OF THE USE OF THIS INFORMATION, EVEN IF ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

This document is a complimentary service provided by Onmark for its members. www.onmarkservices.com
© 2007 Onmark, Inc. Onmark is a trademark of Oncology Therapeutics Network

March 2007