

Gefitinib

Description

Gefitinib (also known as Iressa[®]) is used to treat certain types of cancer. Gefitinib is taken by mouth. It is available as a 250-mg tablet.

How to take gefitinib

- Read the directions on the bottle carefully to make sure you take this medicine correctly.
- Try to take each day's dose at the same time each day.
- You may take this medicine with or without food. Take with food if it causes stomach upset.
- Gefitinib tablets cannot be crushed.
- If you cannot swallow the tablet or are giving the medicine by NG tube, you may put tablet in half a glass of water. Let it sit for a few minutes. Then, mix and drink. Rinse the glass with more water and drink again to make sure no medicine is left on the sides or bottom of the glass.

Possible side effects

- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Acne
- Eye irritation
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Dry skin, itching
- Abnormal liver tests (rare)
- Lung damage (rare)

These are the most common side effects, but there may be others. Please report all side effects to the doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

In case of a severe side effect or reaction, call the doctor, nurse, or pharmacist at 595-3300. If you are outside the Memphis area, dial toll-free 1-866-2STJUDE (1-866-278-5833), and press 0 once the call is connected.

This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.

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Special instructions

- Because gefitinib may cause birth defects, do not take this medicine if you are pregnant. Both men and women who are taking gefitinib should use effective birth control methods.
- It is not known whether gefitinib passes into breast milk. Because this medicine might cause serious harm to a nursing infant, women who are taking gefitinib should not breast-feed.
- Gefitinib tablets should be stored at room temperature.
- Keep this medicine out of reach of children and pets.
- If you miss a dose, follow these guidelines:
 - Take the missed dose right away as long as the next dose is more than 12 hours away.
 - Do not take the missed dose if your next dose is due in less than 12 hours.
 - Never take a double dose or extra doses.

Safe handling

All chemotherapy drugs taken by mouth can pose a health hazard to caregivers and patients. You should be careful when handling this medicine and try to keep the drug from touching the skin. Taking precautions will ensure that both the patient and the caregiver are protected as well as possible.

- Prepare a clean area where the drug can be handled safely (away from areas where food is prepared, out of the reach of children, and out from under any air vents or fans).
- We suggest you or the caregiver wear gloves while handling this medicine. Wash your hands right away if your skin comes in contact with the medicine.
- Completely clean up any spills in the area where the medicine is prepared.

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