

# ORAL CHEMOTHERAPY EDUCATION



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## ERLOTINIB

### Name of your medication

Generic name — erlotinib (er-LOH-tih-nib)  
Brand name — Tarceva® (tar-SEE-vuh)

### Common uses

Erlotinib is used to treat people with metastatic non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) with an epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) genetic mutation, and pancreatic cancer in combination with another medication, gemcitabine (Gemzar®).

Erlotinib may also be used for other treatments.

### Dose and schedule

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Taking erlotinib as instructed is important to allow your treatment to be as effective as possible, so here are some key points to remember.

- ❑ Your dose may vary, but the usual dose of erlotinib is 150 milligrams (150 mg) for NSCLC and 100 mg for pancreatic cancer to be taken by mouth once daily. The dose may be adjusted by your care provider based on your individual needs.
- ❑ Erlotinib must be taken without food (at least one hour before or two hours after a meal or snack) at the same time each day.
- ❑ Erlotinib should be taken whole and not crushed, cut, or dissolved. If you are unable to swallow erlotinib, talk to your care provider or pharmacist for possible options.
- ❑ If you miss a dose of erlotinib, **do not** take an extra dose or two doses at one time. Simply take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Be sure to write down if you miss a dose and let your care provider know about any missed doses.

### Drug and food interactions

- ❑ Erlotinib has many drug interactions. Inform your care providers of all prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal products that you are taking.
- ❑ Avoid using proton pump inhibitors (e.g., omeprazole [Prilosec®], esomeprazole [Nexium®]) while taking erlotinib, if possible.
- ❑ If taken with a histamine blocker (e.g., ranitidine [Zantac®], famotidine [Pepcid®]), take erlotinib 10 hours after the histamine blocker and at least 2 hours prior to the next histamine blocker dose.
- ❑ If taken with an antacid (e.g., calcium carbonate [Tums®], magnesium hydroxide, Rolaids®), separate erlotinib from the antacid by several hours.
- ❑ Grapefruit or grapefruit juice may interact with erlotinib; avoid eating or drinking these during treatment with erlotinib.
- ❑ Smoking cigarettes may interact with erlotinib and should be avoided. Your doctor may need to adjust your dose of erlotinib if you are currently smoking. Please talk to your care provider if you plan to smoke cigarettes during treatment.
- ❑ Talk with your care team or pharmacist before taking new medications or supplements, or receiving any vaccines.

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### Storage and handling

Handle erlotinib with care. Just like when chemotherapy is given into the vein, this drug can be toxic, and exposure of the drug to others should be limited.

- Store erlotinib at room temperature (68°F–77°F) in a dry location away from light.
- Keep erlotinib out of reach of children and pets.
- Leave erlotinib in the provided packaging until it is ready to be taken.
- Whenever possible, give erlotinib to yourself and follow the steps below. If a family member, friend, or caregiver needs to give erlotinib to you, they also need to follow these steps:
  1. Wash hands with soap and water.
  2. Put on gloves to avoid touching the medication. (Gloves are not necessary if you give the drug to yourself.)
  3. Gently transfer the erlotinib from its package to a small medicine or other disposable cup.
  4. Administer the medicine immediately by mouth with water.
  5. Remove gloves and do not use them for anything else.
  6. Throw gloves and medicine cup in household trash.
  7. Wash hands with soap and water.
- If a daily pill box or pill reminder will be used, contact your care team before using:
  - The person filling the box or reminder should wear gloves (gloves are not necessary if you are filling the box or reminder).
  - When empty, the box or reminder should be washed with soap and water before refilling. Be sure to wash hands with soap and water after the task is complete, whether or not gloves are worn
- If you have any unused erlotinib, **do not** throw it in the trash and **do not** flush it down the sink or toilet. Talk to your care provider or pharmacist about proper disposal of erlotinib.
- If you are traveling, put your erlotinib's packaging in a sealed plastic bag. Ask your pharmacist if any additional travel precautions are needed.

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### Side Effects of Erlotinib

Below are common side effects that have been known to happen in about one third or more of patients taking erlotinib are listed on the left side of this table. You **MAY NOT** experience these side effects. Options to help manage any side effects that do occur are included on the right side of this table. These should be discussed with your care provider. If you experience any side effect you cannot manage or that is not listed here, contact your care provider.

Possible Side Effect	Management
<b>Acne-like rash</b>	<p>A rash that looks like acne may appear on your face, chest, and upper back while taking this medication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your doctor may prescribe medication to help prevent or manage the rash.</li> <li>If you get a rash, keep the area around it clean and dry.</li> <li>Check with your care provider before using anything to treat it.</li> <li>Do not use over-the-counter acne treatments, such as benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid, and soaps containing alcohol.</li> <li>Oatmeal baths and unscented moisturizers may help with itching.</li> </ul> <p>Sunlight can make symptoms worse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid sun exposure as much as possible to decrease the risk of sunburn. The highest exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation occurs from 10 am–4 pm.</li> <li>Wear long-sleeved clothing, with UV protection if possible.</li> <li>Wear broad-brimmed hats.</li> <li>Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen (UVA/UVB) with at least SPF 30 as often as directed on the bottle.</li> <li>Use lip balm with at least SPF 30.</li> </ul>
<b>Diarrhea (loose and/or urgent bowel movements)</b>	<p>Monitor how many bowel movements you have each day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drink 8–10 glasses of water or fluid each day unless your care provider has instructed you to limit your fluid intake related to some other health problem.</li> <li>Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day rather than a few large meals.</li> <li>Eat bland, low-fiber foods (e.g., bananas, applesauce, potatoes, chicken, rice, toast).</li> <li>Avoid high-fiber foods, such as raw vegetables, raw fruits, and whole grains.</li> <li>Avoid foods that cause gas, such as broccoli and beans.</li> <li>Avoid lactose-containing foods, such as yogurt and milk.</li> <li>Avoid spicy, fried, and greasy foods.</li> </ul> <p>Contact your provider if any of the following occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of bowel movements you have in a day increases by four or more.</li> <li>You feel dizzy or lightheaded.</li> </ul> <p>Your care provider may recommend an over-the-counter medication called loperamide (Imodium®) to help with your diarrhea, but talk to your care provider before starting this medication.</p>

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Possible Side Effect	Management
<b>Nausea or vomiting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat and drink slowly.</li> <li>• Drink 8–10 glasses of water or fluid each day unless your care provider has instructed you to limit your fluid intake.</li> <li>• Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day rather than a few large meals.</li> <li>• Eat bland foods; avoid spicy, fried, and greasy foods.</li> <li>• Avoid vigorous exercise immediately after eating.</li> <li>• Don't lie down immediately after eating.</li> <li>• Avoid strong odors.</li> </ul> <p>Let your provider know if you experience nausea or vomiting. Your provider may prescribe medication that can help.</p>
<b>Fatigue</b>	<p>You may be more tired than usual or have less energy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay as active as possible, but know it is okay to rest as needed.</li> <li>• Try to do some activity every day.</li> <li>• Plan your activities, and do them at a time of day when you feel a bit more energetic.</li> <li>• Avoid operating heavy machinery if you feel too tired.</li> </ul>
<b>Rash or itchy skin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep your skin moisturized with creams and moisturizing lotions to decrease the risk of rash or itchiness, and wear loose fitting clothing.</li> <li>• Avoid using perfumes and cologne as these products may increase rash symptoms.</li> <li>• Avoid being in the heat for long periods of time.</li> <li>• Your provider may recommend an over-the-counter antihistamine or a topical cream.</li> </ul> <p>Sunlight can make symptoms worse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid sun exposure as much as possible to decrease the risk of sunburn. The highest exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation occurs from 10 am–4 pm.</li> <li>• Wear long-sleeved clothing, with UV protection if possible.</li> <li>• Wear broad-brimmed hats.</li> <li>• Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen (UVA/UVB) with at least SPF 30 as often as directed on the bottle.</li> </ul> <p>If your rash or itching continues to worsen, contact your care provider.</p>
<b>Changes in liver function</b>	<p>Your liver function will be checked periodically by a simple blood test. Contact your care provider if you notice any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yellowing of the skin or whites of your eyes</li> <li>• Dark or brown urine</li> <li>• Unusual bleeding or bruising</li> </ul>

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Possible Side Effect	Management
<b>Cough or shortness of breath</b>	A cough that does not produce any mucous or congestion relief (dry cough) may occur while taking this medication. If you experience any breathing problems or shortness of breath, notify your care provider immediately. This may be a serious side effect of the medication.
<b>Decreased appetite or weight loss</b>	<p>Talk to your provider if you notice a decrease in your weight while taking this medication.</p> <p>When you don't feel like eating, try the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat small frequent meals instead of three large meals each day.</li> <li>• Keep snacks nearby so you can eat when you feel hungry.</li> <li>• Drink liquid nutritional supplements.</li> </ul> <p>Drink 8–10 glasses of water or fluid each day, especially if you are not eating, unless your care provider has instructed you to limit your fluid intake.</p>
<b>Increased risk for infection or fever</b>	<p>Contact your care provider if you experience any signs or symptoms of an infection such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever (temperature higher than 100.4°F or 38°C)</li> <li>• Chills</li> <li>• Sore throat</li> <li>• Burning with urination</li> <li>• Unusual tiredness</li> <li>• A sore that becomes red, is draining, or does not heal</li> </ul> <p>Check with your care provider before taking any medicine for a fever or chills.</p>

### Serious side effects of erlotinib

- ❑ Erlotinib may be harmful to your kidneys. Speak to your care provider to know when you need to have laboratory tests done to monitor your kidneys. If you get this side effect, your doctor may change your dose or stop treatment for some time.
- ❑ Tell your doctor right away if you get high fever, nausea, vomiting, severe abdominal pain.
- ❑ Erlotinib can increase your risk of having a stroke. Be aware of the signs of a stroke and seek medical attention immediately at the first sign of a stroke.
- ❑ Erlotinib can be harmful to the red blood cells in your body. Alert your care provider if you are feeling unusually tired, weak, or short of breath.
- ❑ Erlotinib may be harmful to your eyes. Be sure to inform your care provider of any issue you have with your vision, or pain in your eyes. Your provider may stop treatment with erlotinib if your eyes are affected.

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- If you are taking warfarin while taking erlotinib, you are at a much higher risk of bleeding. Be sure to regularly have your international normalized ratio checked, and seek medical attention at any signs of bleeding.
- Erlotinib may cause your lung tissue to scar which is called interstitial lung disease. Call your care team if you are feeling short of breath, have a fever, or have a lasting dry cough

If you experience ANY uncontrolled side effect, call your physician or healthcare center immediately:

**(INSTITUTIONAL CONTACT INFO)**

### Handling body fluids and waste

Erlotinib remains in your body for several days after it is taken, so some of the drug may be present in urine, stool, sweat, or vomit. Once you have started to take erlotinib, it is important to follow the instructions below every day for as long as your treatment lasts. This will keep yourself, loved ones, and the environment as safe as possible.

- Pregnant women should avoid touching anything that may be soiled with body fluids from the patient.
- Toilet and septic systems
  - You may use the same toilet, septic tank, and/or sewer that you usually use. If you have a low-flow toilet, close the lid and flush twice to ensure all waste has been discarded.
  - If the toilet or toilet seat becomes soiled with urine, stool, or vomit, clean the surfaces before other people use the toilet.
  - Wash hands with soap and water after using the toilet.
- If you need a bedpan, be sure your caregiver knows to wear gloves to assist with cleanup and to wash the bedpan with soap and water every day.
- If you do not have good control of bladder or bowels, use a disposable pad with a plastic back, a diaper, or a sheet to absorb body waste.
- Wash any skin that has been exposed to body waste or erlotinib with soap and water.
- Linens or clothing that are soiled with body fluids or body waste should be washed separately from other linens and clothing. If you do not have a washer, place the soiled linens in a plastic bag until they can be washed.
- Wash hands with soap and water after touching linens or clothing that may be soiled with body fluids.

### Pregnancy, sexual activity, and contraception

- Women should not become pregnant and men should not get a partner pregnant while taking erlotinib. Men and women of childbearing age and potential should use effective contraception during therapy and for a minimum of 1 month after the last dose of erlotinib.
- Effective contraception could include 1 or more of the following: oral contraceptive, barrier methods, etc.
- Do not breastfeed while taking erlotinib and for 2 weeks after the last dose of erlotinib.
- Inform your care provider if you become pregnant.
- It is safe to hug and kiss. Special precautions may be needed for sexual activity while on erlotinib, and you are encouraged to ask your care provider.

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### Obtaining medication

Talk with your care provider about how to obtain your erlotinib.

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### Additional resources

**Product website:** <http://www.tarceva.com/patient>

**Product prescribing information:** [https://www.gene.com/download/pdf/tarceva\\_prescribing.pdf](https://www.gene.com/download/pdf/tarceva_prescribing.pdf)

**Product resources:** <http://www.tarceva.com/hcp/patient-support/other-programs>

**Updated – October 10, 2022**

### Additional instructions

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**Important notice:** The Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC), Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association (HOPA), National Community Oncology Dispensing Association, Inc. (NCODA), and Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) have collaborated in gathering information for and developing this patient education guide. This guide represents a brief summary of the medication derived from information provided by the drug manufacturer and other resources. This guide does not cover all existing information related to the possible uses, directions, doses, precautions, warnings, interactions, adverse effects, or risks associated with this medication and should not substitute for the advice of a qualified healthcare professional. Provision of this guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation, or favoring of this medication by ACCC, HOPA, NCODA, or ONS, who assume no liability for and cannot ensure the accuracy of the information presented. The collaborators are not making any representations with respect to the medications whatsoever, and any and all decisions, with respect to such medications, are at the sole risk of the individual consuming the medication. All decisions related to taking this medication should be made with the guidance and under the direction of a qualified healthcare professional.

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