

Gefitinib

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| Names | The generic drug name is gefitinib (ge-FI-tye-nib). Iressa® is the drug brand name. There may be other brand names for this medication. |
| How is it Administered? | Your medicine comes as a tablet, to be taken by mouth, either with or without food. |
| Why Am I taking Gefitinib? | Gefitinib is used to treat advanced non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). |
| How Does it Work? | <p>Gefitinib is not a traditional chemotherapy medication; it is in a class of medications called signal transduction inhibitor, a type of targeted therapy.</p> <p>Traditional chemotherapy drugs identify cancer cells by their rapid rate of reproduction, and then attack those cells. Unfortunately, there are cells in our bodies that normally reproduce rapidly and these cells are also affected by traditional chemotherapy drugs, resulting in unpleasant side effects such as nausea and hair loss.</p> <p>Gefitinib is designed to work differently. Instead of attacking rapidly reproducing cells, it locates a protein (EGFR Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor) on the surface of the cancer cells and interferes with cell reproduction. Cells that cannot reproduce will die.</p> |
| What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin? | <p>Before taking gefitinib, tell your health care provider if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have ever had an allergic reaction to gefitinib• are pregnant or breastfeeding• have idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, or kidney or liver disease• are taking any herbal products, especially St. John's wort <p>This drug may interact with other medications, increasing or decreasing their effectiveness or causing harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal or diet supplements that you are taking.</p> |

What Are Some Possible Side?

- Decreased appetite, nausea, vomiting, weight loss, or diarrhea
- Rash, itchy or dry skin, acne
- Mouth and throat sores
- Fatigue and/or weakness

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- If you vomit or have diarrhea, you are at risk for dehydration. To prevent dehydration, drink plenty of fluids, unless your doctor has told you to watch your fluid intake because of another medical condition.
- Do not put anything on your rash unless your doctor or nurse says you may. Keep the area around the rash clean.
- Mouth care is **very important**. You should brush your teeth with a very soft toothbrush. Rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of water or ½ teaspoon of baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) in 8 ounces of water. This should be done at least after every meal and at bedtime.
- Avoid mouthwash that contains alcohol. Avoid alcohol and smoking because they can irritate your mouth and throat.
- Take your temperature as directed by your nurse, and whenever you feel warm (feverish). Report a temperature of 100.5 F (38.0 C) or above **immediately**.

When Should I Call the Doctor?

Call your doctor immediately if you experience:

- any sign of infection: fever of 100.5°F (38°C) or higher, chills, cough, sore throat, pain or burning upon urination; redness or tenderness along a vein, at an IV site, or at any other wound or skin irritation
- any sign of an allergic reaction: itching or hives, swelling in your face or hands, swelling or tingling in your mouth or throat, chest tightness, trouble breathing, dizziness, or palpitations
- unusual bruising or bleeding: bleeding lasts more than 10-15 minutes or that causes dizziness; black or bloody stools; vomit that is bloody or that looks like coffee grounds; blood in your urine or phlegm /mucus, unusually heavy menstrual bleeding, spontaneous bleeding from your gums or nose, or superficial bleeding into the skin that appears as a rash of pinpoint-sized reddish-purple spots (petechiae)
- any sign of dehydration: sunken eyes, dry mouth, and/or decreased urination

When Should I
Call the Doctor?
(cont)

Call your doctor or nurse as soon as possible if you have:

- nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, rash, or itchy skin that does not go away with prescribed medicine
- painful mouth or throat that prevents you from eating or drinking
- extreme fatigue or weakness that interferes with daily activities
- eye irritation; dry, red, or painful eyes; blurred vision

What Else
Should I Know
About Gefitinib?

- Take this drug 1 hour before or 2 hours after you eat food.
- Talk to your doctor about eating grapefruit and drinking grapefruit juice while you are taking this medicine.
- Gefitinib is not available in pharmacies. You can only get gefitinib through a distribution program that has been set up by the manufacturer.
- Do not get pregnant or father a child while you are receiving gefitinib. Use an effective method of birth control during treatment. If you think a pregnancy has occurred while using this medicine, tell your doctor right away.
- Do not breastfeed while taking gefitinib.
- It is very important that your doctor check your progress at regular visits to make sure that this medicine is working properly and to check for unwanted effects.
- Drink at least 2-3 quarts of fluid every 24 hours, unless you are instructed otherwise.
- If you would like more information about gefitinib, talk to your doctor.