

Imatinib

Names	The generic drug name is imatinib (i-ma-TIN-ib). The brand name is Gleevac®. There may be other names for this medication.
Why am I Taking Imatinib and How is it Given ?	<p>This medication treats CML (chronic myelogenous leukemia) and some gastrointestinal tumors.</p> <p>Your medication is a tablet that you take by mouth, usually once or twice a day. Take it after a meal, with a large glass of water to reduce the risk of upset stomach. Take it about the same time(s) each day.</p>
How Does it Work?	<p>Cancers are diseases in which abnormal cells reproduce uncontrollably. Imatinib is not a traditional chemotherapy agent; it is a type of <i>targeted therapy</i>. Traditional chemotherapy drugs identify cancer cells by their rapid rate of reproduction, and then attack those cells. Unfortunately, it also attacks some normal cells in your body that naturally reproduce rapidly.</p> <p>Imatinib, a protein-tyrosine kinase inhibitor, works differently. It blocks the action of an abnormal protein in the cancer cells, a protein that signals the cancer cells to reproduce. By blocking this protein, the cancer cells stops or slows down its reproduction.</p>
What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin Receiving Imatinib?	<p>Tell your doctor if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have ever had an allergic reaction to imatinib• have ever had high blood pressure; a heart attack; an irregular heartbeat; diabetes; or heart, lung, thyroid, or liver disease• smoke, use street drugs, drink alcohol, or have a history of heavy alcohol use• are taking any herbal products, especially St. John's wort• are pregnant or breastfeeding <p>This medication 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 Effects?

- Low levels of white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets, which can increase your risk for infection, fatigue, and bleeding
- Poor appetite, nausea, vomiting, decreased appetite, and indigestion
- Joint or bone pain, muscle cramps
- Diarrhea (more common), constipation (less common)
- Skin rash
- Headache
- Depression, anxiety
- Teary eyes

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- To help avoid infections, stay away from crowds or people with colds or other infections. Wash your hands often. Talk to your doctor before you have any vaccinations, such as a flu shot.
- If you are fatigued, take rests during the day, limit your activities, and do an activity at a time of day when you feel a bit more energetic.
- If you have a low platelet count, be aware that intercourse and other sexual activities may cause bleeding. Talk to your doctor or nurse about whether sexual activity is safe for you at this time. If intercourse is permitted, use a water-based lubricant and avoid forceful thrusting.
- Learn to ask for and accept help with household and daily chores.
- Be careful when handling sharp objects. Avoid rough sports or other situations that could cause bruising or injury. Use an electric razor.
- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or headache.
- Drink at least 2-3 quarts of fluid, especially water, every 24 hours, unless your doctor tells you to limit your fluids.
- If you develop a rash, do not put anything on it unless your doctor approves it.

What Else Do I Need to Know About Imatinib?

- Talk to your doctor about whether you can use over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®), aspirin and products containing aspirin, and St John's wort.
- Talk to your doctor about what you should do if you develop diarrhea during your treatment. Do not take any medications to treat diarrhea without talking to your doctor.
- Talk to your doctor about drinking grapefruit juice or eating grapefruit while taking this medication.
- This drug may have harmful effects on an unborn child. Both men and women should use effective methods of birth control during your

treatment. If you become pregnant or father a child while taking this medication, tell your doctor right away.

- Do not breast-feed while you are taking imatinib.
- Store this at room temperature and away from excess heat and moisture (not in the bathroom).
- *A rare, but potentially serious* side effect of imatinib is liver toxicity. Your doctor will monitor your LFTs (liver function tests) with regular blood tests. Be sure to keep all your appointments with your doctor and the laboratory.
- If you are unable to swallow the tablets, place all of the tablets that you need for one dose into a glass of water or apple juice. Use 50 ml (a little less than 2 ounces) of liquid for each 100 mg tablet and 100 ml (a little less than 4 ounces) of liquid for each 400 mg tablet. Stir with a spoon until the tablets crumble completely and drink the mixture immediately.
- If your doctor has told you to take 800 mg of imatinib, you should take two of the 400 mg tablets. (Do not take 8 of the 100 mg tablets. The tablet coating contains iron, and you will get too much iron.)
- If you miss a dose, do not take the missed dose at all and do not double the next one. Go back to your regular dosing schedule and check with your doctor.
- If you would like more information about imatinib, talk to your doctor.