

Eltrombopag

Names

The generic name is eltrombopag (el-TROM-boe-pag) The brand name is Promacta®. There may be other names for this medication.

Why am I Taking this Medication and How do I Take it?

- This medication increases the platelet count in patients with chronic ITP (immune thrombocytopenic purpura) and other conditions.
- Eltrombopag comes as a tablet, which is taken by mouth once a day, at the same time every day.
- Take this medication on an **empty** stomach. Take it 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal.
- Swallow the tablets whole. **Do not chew, crush, or break them.**
- The following foods and medications must be taken more than 4 hours before or more than 4 hours after taking eltrombopag:
 - calcium rich foods (examples: dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt; sardines; dark leafy greens)
 - multivitamins and supplements that contain iron calcium, aluminum, magnesium, selenium, or zinc
 - antacids

How Does it Work?

Eltrombopag is in a class of medications called *thrombopoietin receptor agonists*. Thrombopoietin is a protein that is made in the liver. It plays an important role in maturing platelet precursor cells into platelets. Platelets play an important part in blood clotting.

Eltrombopag binds to thrombopoietin and causes bone marrow cells to produce more platelets. Patients with ITP may see an increase in their platelet count 1-2 weeks after starting eltrombopag. It may take longer for patients taking it for an off-label use.

What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?

Tell your doctor if you:

- are allergic to eltrombopag or have allergies
- take antacid medications (Maalox®, Mylanta®, Tums®, Rolaids®, sucralfate /Carafate®) for heartburn or acid reflux (GERD)
- take iron, calcium, aluminum, magnesium, selenium, or zinc
- have, or have ever had, liver disease, a cataract, blood clots, bleeding

problems, or kidney disease

- are of East Asian ancestry (Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese, Japanese) – you may be started at a lower dose
- had surgery to remove your spleen
- use tobacco products
- are pregnant or breastfeeding

This drug may interact with other medications or cause harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, or supplements that you are taking.

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Nausea, vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Increase in liver function tests
- Muscle or back pain
- Sore mouth or throat
- Headache
- Rash
- Low red blood cell, white blood cell, and/or platelet counts, which increases your risk of anemia, infections, and bleeding.

Rare but potentially serious side effects

- Liver toxicity. Symptoms: dark urine, feeling tired, decreased appetite, upset stomach and yellow skin. Your doctor will monitor your liver function tests (LFTs) with regular blood tests.
- Bone marrow fibrosis, which leads to scarring of the bone marrow (can theoretically increase your risk of leukemia later in life.) If your blood counts worsen throughout treatment, a bone marrow biopsy may be done to look for marrow fibrosis.
- Blood clots (at higher doses and in patients whose dose was not reduced based on platelet counts.) Symptoms: swelling, pain or tenderness, reddish or bluish skin discoloration with warmth to touch. These symptoms usually happen on one side of the body and in either the leg or arm.
- Cataracts (seen in animal studies – definite link has not been demonstrated in humans).

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- ✓ **Drink 2-3 quarts of water every day unless your doctor tells you to limit your fluids.** This is even more important in the days before and after you have chemotherapy. This will help flush the

medications out and help prevent dehydration and constipation.

- ✓ **Nausea, vomiting:** To help prevent nausea, avoid fried, spicy, and fatty foods on the days you receive chemo and for 2-3 days afterwards. Eating small, frequent meals may help. If you have nausea, try foods and drinks that are 'easy on the stomach' - bland foods, ginger ale, dry crackers, and toast.
- ✓ **Diarrhea:** Loperamide (Imodium®) is available over the counter. You can take 2 tablets after the first episode of diarrhea, followed by 1 tablet (2mg) after each loose stool as needed. **Do not take more than 8 tablets (16mg) in a 24-hour period.**
- ✓ **Constipation:** To help prevent constipation, add high fiber foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to your diet and, if possible, keep moving throughout the day. If you do not move your bowels in 2-3 days, you will need to take a laxative such as Senna-S. If not better in 2 days, call the clinic.
- ✓ **Pain, headache:** Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Motrin®) may help with discomfort from headache, and/or aches and pain **but talk to your doctor before taking any of these medications.**
- ✓ **Mouth care:** To prevent mouth sores, rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ teaspoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of water after every meal and at bedtime. Brush your teeth and gums often with a soft toothbrush. Do not use alcohol, mouthwashes that contain alcohol, or tobacco products.
- ✓ **Skin care:** Use a sunblock with SPF 30 or higher that protects against both UVA and UVB rays when you are outdoors. Wear sunglasses and protective clothes (brimmed hat, long sleeves, etc.) when in the sun. Do not use tanning beds. If you develop a rash, keep the area clean and dry and check with your doctor before using any creams or ointments on the area.
- ✓ **Low white count:** Stay away from people with colds, flu, or other infections, wash your hands often, and talk to your doctor before you have any vaccinations (immunizations), such as a flu shot.
- ✓ **Low red blood cell count/fatigue:** Eat well and stay out of bed as much as possible during your treatment to stay strong. If you feel fatigued, take rests during the day, and try to limit your activities.
- ✓ **Low platelet count:** Be careful when handling sharp objects, stay away from rough sports, and other situations where you could be bruised, cut, or injured. Use an electric razor. 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.

When Should I Call the Doctor?

Report any of the following to your doctor right away:

- any signs of liver failure: Yellowing of the skin or the whites of the eyes (jaundice), unusual darkening of the urine, unusual tiredness, and/or pain in the right upper stomach area
- any signs of bleeding: Abnormal bruising, dark colored stools, blood in the urine, or heavy menstrual periods
- nausea that is not relieved by prescribed medication and that interferes with your ability to eat
- more than 4-5 episodes of vomiting or diarrhea in 24 hours

What Else Do I Need to Know About Eltrombopag?

- The goal of eltrombopag therapy is not raise your platelet count to a normal level but to raise it high enough level to minimize bleeding risks and the need for transfusions.
- Your doctor will make dosage adjustments depending on your platelet count.
- For heartburn: Take over-the-counter antacid medications **more than 4 hours before or 4 hours after taking eltrombopag**. Other options for managing heartburn that do not interact with eltrombopag include Or, you can take famotidine (Pepcid®) or ranitidine (Zantac®); they do not interact with eltrombopag .
- Use 2 separate methods of birth control during treatment.
- A program called Promacta CARES has been set up to be sure that eltrombopag is used safely. You, your doctor, and your pharmacy will need to enroll in this program. As part of the program, you will receive written information about the risks of taking eltrombopag, and you will need to sign a consent form.
- You will have regular blood tests during your treatment to check blood counts and your liver function.
- If you have questions about eltrombopag, talk to your doctor.