

Erlotinib

Names	The generic drug name is erlotinib (er-LO-tye-nib). Tarceva® is a brand name. There may be other names for this medication.
Why am I Taking Erlotinib and How is It Given?	<p>This drug is used to treat advanced non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) and advanced pancreatic cancer.</p> <p>This medication is a tablet taken by mouth on an empty stomach. Take it 1 hour before OR 2 hours after eating. If you are taking antacids, take them several hours before or several hours after you take erlotinib. Missed dose: Take it as soon as you remember. If several hours have passed, skip it and go back to your regular schedule and check with your doctor. Do not double dose.</p>
How Does This Drug Work?	<p>Erlotinib is a type of targeted therapy rather than a traditional chemotherapy drug. Traditional chemotherapy drugs identify cancer cells by their rapid rate of division (reproduction), and then attack those cells. Unfortunately, some healthy cells in our bodies (skin, GI tract, bone marrow) normally reproduce rapidly, and these cells are also affected.</p> <p>Erlotinib is designed to work differently. It locates a protein (EGFR or Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor) on the surface of the cancer cells and inhibits an enzyme within those cells, which slows the growth of the cancer cells. The exact mechanism of how this takes place is not yet understood.</p>
What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?	<p>Before taking erlotinib, tell your health care provider if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• are allergic to erlotinib or have allergies• are or have recently been treated with chemo or radiation therapy• have or have ever had lung disease, an infection, stomach ulcers, liver disease, or kidney disease• use any type of tobacco products• 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 all medications, vitamins, or supplements you take.</p>

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Skin changes: Rash, itchy or dry skin, darkening of the skin, changes in appearance of hair and nails, increased sensitivity to sunlight (photosensitivity), and/or hair loss
- Diarrhea
- Decreased appetite, nausea, vomiting, and/or stomach pain
- Fatigue
- Cough and/or shortness of breath
- Nausea, vomiting
- Mouth and/or throat sores

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 will help flush the medications out and help prevent dehydration and constipation. Try to drink a variety of fluids to help provide the calories, sodium (salt), and other electrolytes your body needs. Broths are a good source of sodium, and some sports drinks provide additional electrolytes (check the labels).
- Avoid unnecessary or long exposure to sunlight. Wear a hat, other protective clothing, sunglasses, and sunscreen. Choose a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher and that contains zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. Use a mild soap to wash your skin (no products with alcohol in them). **If you get a rash, talk to your doctor before using any products on it.** Keep the area around the rash clean.
- To help prevent diarrhea, drink small sips of a liquid such as a sugar-free sports drink often throughout the day, eat mild foods such as crackers, and avoid spicy foods. (If you have diarrhea or are vomiting, you are at risk for dehydration. Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen diarrhea or nausea.)
- 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, and limit your activities, to a time of day when you feel a bit more energetic. Learn to ask for and accept help with household and daily chores.
- 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 after every meal and at bedtime, at a minimum. Avoid smoking, tobacco products, alcohol, and mouthwashes that contain alcohol.

When Should I
Call the
Doctor?

Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if you have signs of severe allergic reaction: Swelling or tingling in your face, tongue, mouth, or throat; chest tightness; wheezing; trouble breathing or swallowing; dizziness, shortness of breath; heart palpitations; or hives
Please let us now if you go to the ER or are admitted to the hospital.

Call your doctor immediately if you experience:

- any sign of infection: fever of 100.4°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
- 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)
- signs of dehydration: sunken eyes, dry mouth, decreased urination
- eye irritation; dry, red, or painful eyes; blurred vision

Call your doctor or nurse as soon as possible if you have any of the following symptoms:

- nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or mouth sores that don't go away with prescribed medicine or that prevent you from eating or drinking
- extreme fatigue or weakness that interferes with daily activities

What Else
Should I Know
About
Erlotinib?

- Talk to your doctor about eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice while taking erlotinib.
- Do not get pregnant or father a child during treatment or for 2 weeks after treatment ends. Both men and women should use a reliable method of birth control. Barrier methods (condoms and diaphragms) are recommended. Erlotinib may harm the fetus.
- Tell your doctors, surgeons, and dentists you are taking erlotinib.
- Keep erlotinib in the container, tightly closed. Store at room temperature, away from heat and moisture (not in the bathroom).
- If you would like more information about erlotinib, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.