



Provincial Health Services Authority

**For the Patient: Erlotinib**  
Other names: TARCEVA®

- **Erlotinib** (er-LOE-tye-nib) is a drug that is used to treat a type of lung cancer. It is a tablet that you take by mouth. The tablet contains lactose.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to erlotinib before treatment begins.
- It is important to **take** erlotinib exactly as directed by your doctor. Erlotinib should be taken with a glass of water, on an empty stomach, either one hour before or two hours after eating.
- If you **vomit** within 30 minutes of taking erlotinib, you can repeat the dose. Let the doctor know as a medication to prevent nausea may be required for future doses.
- If you **miss a dose** of erlotinib, take it as soon as you can if it is within 12 hours of the missed dose. If it is over 12 hours since your missed dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing times.
- Other drugs such as ketoconazole, omeprazole (LOSEC®), rantidine (ZANTAC®), rifampin (RIFADIN®, ROFACT®), and warfarin (COUMADIN®) may **interact** with erlotinib. Tell your doctor if you are taking these or any other drugs as you may need extra blood tests or your dose may need to be changed. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs.
  - Antacid doses should be separated from erlotinib doses by at least 2 hours. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other drug to reduce stomach acid such as omeprazole (LOSEC®) or ranitidine (ZANTAC®).
- **Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice**, as these may interact with erlotinib.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of erlotinib.
- Erlotinib may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with erlotinib. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- **Tell** doctors or dentists that you are being treated with erlotinib before you receive any treatment from them.
- **Store** erlotinib tablets out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<b>Nausea and vomiting</b> may occur.	<p>You may be given a prescription for antinausea drug(s) to take before your treatment and/or at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred, so follow directions closely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of liquids.</li> <li>• Eat and drink often in small amounts.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <a href="#">Practical Tips to Manage Nausea</a>.*</li> </ul>
<b>Diarrhea</b> may occur.	<p>To help diarrhea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of liquids.</li> <li>• Eat and drink often in small amounts.</li> <li>• Avoid high fibre foods as outlined in <a href="#">Food Choices to Help Manage Diarrhea</a>.*</li> <li>• A prescription for loperamide (IMODIUM®) is sometimes required.</li> <li>• <b>Note:</b> If lactose in milk usually gives you diarrhea, the lactose in the tablet may be causing your diarrhea. Take LACTAID® just before your erlotinib dose.</li> </ul>
<b>Sore mouth</b> may occur a few days after treatment. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth or in the throat. <b>Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. If your gums bleed, use gauze instead of a brush. Use baking soda instead of toothpaste.</li> <li>• Make a mouthwash with <math>\frac{1}{4}</math> teaspoon baking soda AND <math>\frac{1}{4}</math> teaspoon salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day.</li> <li>• Try soft, bland foods like puddings, milkshakes and cream soups.</li> <li>• Avoid spicy, crunchy or acidic food, and very hot or cold foods.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <a href="#">Food Ideas to Try with a Sore Mouth</a>.*</li> </ul>
Skin reactions such as <b>rash, dryness, or itchiness</b> are common.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moisturizing creams can help prevent or reduce skin dryness.</li> <li>• If skin reactions persist or get worse, contact the doctor.</li> </ul>

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
Your <b>skin may darken</b> in some areas such as your hands, elbows and knees.	This will slowly return to normal once you stop treatment with erlotinib. Exposure to the sun might make this worse, so: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid direct sunlight.</li> <li>• Wear a hat, long sleeves and long pants or skirt outside on sunny days.</li> <li>• Apply a sun block lotion with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15.</li> </ul>
<b>Tiredness</b> and lack of energy may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <a href="#">Fatigue/Tiredness – Patient Handout</a> OR <a href="#">Your Bank to Energy Savings: Helping People with Cancer Handle Fatigue</a>. *If tiredness persists or gets worse, tell your doctor at your next visit.</li> </ul>
<b>Decreased appetite</b> sometimes occurs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to eat regular meals and consult a nutritionist if your weight is starting to decrease.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <a href="#">Food Ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite</a>. *</li> </ul>
<b>Hair loss</b> does not occur with erlotinib.	

**\*Please ask your chemotherapy nurse or pharmacist for a copy.**

**SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:**

- Signs of **lung problems** that are *new* or suddenly *getting worse*, such as dry cough or shortness of breath.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin, extensive bruising.
- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- **Eye irritation or changes in eyesight.**

**CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:**

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Redness, swelling, pain or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth or throat.
- Skin rash or itching.

**REPORT ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO YOUR DOCTOR**