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Cetuximab: Patient drug information

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(For additional information [see "Cetuximab: Drug information"](#))

Brand Names: US Erbitux

Brand Names: Canada Erbitux

Warning

- Some people have had very bad and sometimes deadly side effects during the infusion. Most of the time, this happened with the first dose. Tell your doctor if you have any bad effects during the infusion.
- Heart attack and sudden death have rarely happened in some people taking this drug and getting radiation or other chemo. Talk with your doctor.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat cancer of the head and neck.
- It is used to treat colorectal cancer.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you have an allergy to cetuximab or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to any drugs like this one, any other drugs, foods, or other substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had, like rash; hives; itching; shortness of breath; wheezing; cough; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat; or any other signs.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug or for 2 months after your last dose.

This drug may interact with other drugs or health problems.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- If you have upset stomach, throwing up, loose stools (diarrhea), or are not hungry, talk with your doctor. There may be ways to lower these side effects.
- You may have more chance of getting an infection. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.
- Talk with your doctor before getting any vaccines. Use with this drug may either raise the chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- Avoid sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and wear clothing and eyewear that protects from the sun while taking this drug and for at least 2 months after care ends.
- It is common for skin reactions to happen with this drug. These reactions may include acne-like rash, change in skin or fingernails, dry or cracked skin, or skin irritation. Most of the time, an acne-like rash happened within 2 weeks of starting this drug and went away after stopping it. Sometimes, the rash lasted for more than 28 days after stopping this drug. Life-threatening and deadly skin reactions have also happened with this drug. Call your doctor if you have red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin or if you have a skin reaction that bothers you.
- If you have had or will be having radiation treatment, talk with your doctor. Worse side effects from radiation treatment have happened with this drug. Sometimes this has been deadly.
- If you are a man and have sex with a female who could get pregnant, protect her from pregnancy during care and for 6 months after care ends. Use birth control that you can trust.
- If you are a man and your sex partner gets pregnant while you take this drug or within 6 months after your last dose, call your doctor right away.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant.
- Use birth control that you can trust during care and for 6 months after care ends.
- If you get pregnant while taking this drug or within 6 months after your last dose, call your doctor right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Signs of fluid and electrolyte problems like mood changes, confusion, muscle pain or weakness, a heartbeat that does not feel normal, very bad dizziness or passing out, fast heartbeat, more thirst, seizures, feeling very tired or weak, not hungry, unable to pass urine or change in the amount of urine produced, dry mouth, dry eyes, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of kidney problems like unable to pass urine, change in how much urine is passed, blood in the urine, or a big weight gain.

- Feeling confused.
- Mood changes.
- Coughing up blood.
- Eye irritation.
- Chest pain or pressure or a fast heartbeat.
- Very bad dizziness or passing out.
- Very bad headache.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Redness or irritation of the palms of hands or soles of feet.
- Very bad and sometimes deadly lung problems have happened with this drug. Call your doctor right away if you have lung or breathing problems like trouble breathing, shortness of breath, or a cough that is new or worse.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Feeling tired or weak.
- Hard stools (constipation).
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Loose stools (diarrhea).
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Not able to sleep.
- Headache.
- Weight loss.
- Nose or throat irritation.
- Not hungry.
- Joint pain.
- Hair loss.
- Bone pain.
- Change in taste.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.
- Other drugs may be given to help with infusion side effects.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Keep a list of all your drugs (prescription, natural products, vitamins, OTC) with you. Give this list to your doctor.
- Talk with the doctor before starting any new drug, including prescription or OTC, natural products, or vitamins.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Check with your pharmacist about how to throw out unused drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

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