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Imatinib: Patient drug information

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(For additional information [see "Imatinib: Drug information"](#) and [see "Imatinib: Pediatric drug information"](#))

Brand Names: US Gleevec

Brand Names: Canada ACT-Imatinib; Apo-Imatinib; Gleevec; Teva-Imatinib

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat cancer.
- It is used to treat blood problems.
- 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 imatinib 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 taking warfarin.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug or for 1 month after you stop this drug.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

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.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert or have clear eyesight until you see how this drug affects you.

- You may have more chance of getting an infection. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.
- You may bleed more easily. Be careful and avoid injury. Use a soft toothbrush and an electric razor.
- 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.
- 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.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause you to swell or keep fluid in your body. Tell your doctor if you have swelling, weight gain, or trouble breathing.
- Very bad and sometimes deadly holes in the GI (gastrointestinal) tract have happened with this drug. Talk with the doctor.
- Very bad and sometimes deadly liver problems have happened with this drug. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Patients with cancer who take this drug may be at greater risk of getting a bad and sometimes deadly health problem called tumor lysis syndrome (TLS). Call your doctor right away if you have a fast heartbeat or a heartbeat that does not feel normal; any passing out; trouble passing urine; muscle weakness or cramps; upset stomach, throwing up, loose stools or not able to eat; or feel sluggish.
- Heart failure has happened with this drug, as well as heart failure that has gotten worse in people who already have it. Tell your doctor if you have heart disease. Call your doctor right away if you have shortness of breath, a big weight gain, a heartbeat that is not normal, or swelling in the arms or legs that is new or worse.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- This drug may affect growth in children and teens in some cases. They may need regular growth checks. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant.
- If you are able to get pregnant, a pregnancy test will be done to show that you are NOT pregnant before starting this drug. Talk with your doctor.
- Use birth control that you can trust to prevent pregnancy while taking this drug and for at least 2 weeks after stopping the drug.
- If you get pregnant while taking this drug or within 2 weeks 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 bleeding like throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds; coughing up blood; blood in the urine; black, red, or tarry stools; bleeding from the gums; vaginal bleeding that is not

normal; bruises without a reason or that get bigger; or any bleeding that is very bad or that you cannot stop.

- Signs of low potassium levels like muscle pain or weakness, muscle cramps, or a heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- 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.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Very bad headache.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Change in eyesight.
- Low mood (depression).
- Bone pain.
- A very bad skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause very bad health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.

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 sleepy.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Dizziness.
- Not able to sleep.
- Belly pain.
- Not hungry.
- Gas.
- Headache.
- Hair loss.
- Dry skin.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Loose stools (diarrhea).
- Hard stools (constipation).
- Change in taste.
- Nose and throat irritation.
- Joint pain.
- Muscle spasm.
- Weight gain.
- Night sweats.

- Back pain.
- Anxiety.

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.

- Take with a meal.
- Take with a full glass of water.
- You may put tablets in a glass of water or apple juice. How much liquid to use depends on your dose. Talk with your doctor. Put this drug in the water or apple juice and stir. Drink right away after this drug has dissolved. Rinse cup with more water or juice and drink.
- Take this drug at the same time of day.
- To gain the most benefit, do not miss doses.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.
- Drink lots of noncaffeine liquids unless told to drink less liquid by your doctor.
- Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice.
- This drug may affect how much of some other drugs are in your body. If you are taking other drugs, talk with your doctor. You may need to have your blood work checked more closely while taking this drug with your other drugs.
- If the tablet is crushed or broken, do not touch the contents. If you do touch the contents or get it in your eyes, wash hands or eyes right away.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

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

- Store at room temperature.
- Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- 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.

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.
- 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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