



Health Information Library

*Providing patient and family education
from hospital to clinic to home.*

IMATINIB MESYLATE

(im-AT-in-ib)

Other names

Gleevec®

How it is given

Imatinib mesylate is taken by mouth one or two times each day. Your doctor will decide how much imatinib mesylate you should take. It is best to take imatinib mesylate with food and a large glass of water.

My imatinib mesylate schedule

_____ capsules (_____ mg) by mouth _____ times per day, every day.

- If you miss a dose or forget to take a dose of imatinib mesylate, take it as soon as you can. If it is almost time for your next dose, wait until then to take the medicine and skip the missed dose. Do not take extra medicine to 'make up' for a missed dose.
- Store your imatinib mesylate at room temperature, away from heat, moisture, and direct light.
- Keep your imatinib mesylate out of the reach of children and never share your medicine with anyone.

Precautions

- Tell your doctor, nurse, and pharmacist the names of all medicine, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products that you take.
- Tell your doctor, nurse, and pharmacist if you have any allergies.
- Talk to your doctor about drinking alcohol.
- Talk to your doctor before taking medicine that contains aspirin.
- Talk to your doctor before getting any vaccines (such as flu shots).
- Tell your doctor if you have any other medical conditions.

How it works

Imatinib mesylate slows or stops the growth of cancer cells in your body. Some of the normal cells in your body may also be affected by imatinib mesylate. Unwanted effects that occur when normal cells are affected by imatinib mesylate are called side effects.

Common side effects

Nausea and vomiting

Some people have nausea and vomiting when they start taking imatinib mesylate. These are temporary side effects that can be prevented or managed with medication and diet changes. Take your imatinib mesylate

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with food and a full glass of water to decrease nausea and vomiting. If this does not help, you may ask your doctor for anti-nausea medicines to control, or at least reduce, nausea and vomiting caused by imatinib mesylate. When you are nauseated, avoid foods that are fatty or spicy and try eating small meals more often instead of three large meals each day. You should try to drink 6-8 glasses of fluid every day. Feeling nauseated or vomiting is unpleasant but usually not dangerous. However, you must let your doctor know about certain situations caused by uncontrolled nausea and vomiting. Call your doctor if you are weak or dizzy, lose consciousness, see blood in your vomit, or cannot drink more than 4 cups of fluid per day.

Decreased appetite

It is very important to eat well while you are getting imatinib mesylate. When you do not feel like eating, try some of the following tips: Try small frequent meals instead of 3 large meals each day. Keep snacks nearby so you can eat when you do feel hungry. Try liquid nutritional supplements. Drink 6-8 glasses of fluid each day, even if you cannot eat solid foods. Talk to a dietitian to learn more about good nutrition.

Neutropenia (decrease in the number of white blood cells)

A low number of white blood cells can make you more likely to get infections. There are several things you can do to help prevent infection.

- Call your doctor immediately if you have a temperature over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Avoid close contact with people (including children) who have the flu or a cold.
- Bathe every day and wash your hands often throughout the day.
- Practice good mouth care.
- Keep all cuts and scrapes clean.
- Do not cut your cuticles or ingrown nails.
- Do not wear fake nails.
- Wear protective clothing when working in the yard.
- Do not handle pet litter boxes.
- Report any signs of infection to your doctor right away. Signs of infection may include; red, swollen, or painful sores, temperature over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, sore throat, painful urination, or chills.

Anemia (decrease in the number of red blood cells)

A low number of red blood cells may make you feel short of breath or more tired than usual. When you have less energy, you should get plenty of rest and limit your activities. Let your doctor know if you feel more tired than usual when performing normal daily activities.

Thrombocytopenia (decrease in the number of platelets)

You are at risk for bruising and bleeding when you have a low number of platelets. There are several things you can do to decrease your risk of bleeding. Use an electric razor to avoid cuts. Use a soft toothbrush to clean your teeth. Check with your doctor before using over-the-counter pain medication, like aspirin or ibuprofen. Avoid activities that might result in injury. Report any unusual bruising or bleeding to your doctor.

Fluid retention

Fluid retention is a build up of fluid in your body tissues or body cavities (such as the area surrounding your lungs or abdomen). Tell your doctor if you have any swelling in the feet, ankles, legs, hands, weight gain of several pounds, or shortness of breath. Weigh yourself regularly so you will know if you have gained weight. Your doctor may prescribe medication to help decrease fluid retention.

Muscle pain (myalgia) and tiredness (fatigue)

You may experience tiredness, pain, or cramps in your muscles while taking imatinib mesylate. Tell your

doctor if you have these symptoms. Do not take any medications for pain or cramps without first checking with your doctor.

Skin changes

Some people develop a rash, itching, redness, or peeling of the skin during treatment with imatinib mesylate. If you experience any of these symptoms or any other skin changes during your treatment let your doctor know immediately.

Headache

Imatinib mesylate can cause headaches. Let your doctor know if you experience any headaches as medication may be used to help relieve the pain.

Diarrhea

Imatinib mesylate may cause diarrhea. Tell your doctor if you have an increase in the number of stools per day or if your stools become loose or watery. If you have diarrhea, it is important to drink plenty of fluids and try to eat bland foods like rice, applesauce, bananas, toast, or cereal. Your doctor may prescribe an anti-diarrhea medication to help decrease diarrhea.

Less common side effects

Liver changes

Your doctor may order blood tests to make sure your liver is working properly. Let your doctor know if you have pain in your abdomen, pass dark colored urine, or notice the white of your eyes looks yellow in color.

Lung changes

Your doctor may listen to your breathing to make sure your lungs are working properly. Let your doctor know if you feel short of breath or have trouble breathing.

Kidney changes

Your doctor may order blood tests or ask for a urine sample to make sure your kidneys are working properly. Let your doctor know if you have pain or burning when you urinate, are not able to pass urine, or notice reddish or bloody urine. You can help prevent kidney problems by drinking plenty of fluids.

If you have other side effects that you think are caused by this medicine, tell your doctor.

Special conditions

Pregnancy

- Imatinib mesylate may cause birth defects. Do not get pregnant while either you or your sexual partner are receiving imatinib mesylate. Effective birth control is necessary during treatment.
- If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor before you start chemotherapy.

Breast feeding

- Do not breast feed while you are receiving imatinib mesylate.

While you are receiving chemotherapy, it is very important to eat well, drink plenty of fluids, and stay active. Also remember to let your doctor know about any concerns you have or side effects you experience.

For questions, please contact: _____

For further information, ask for a copy of the "Chemotherapy and You" booklet produced by the National Cancer Institute.