

Imatinib (Gleevec)

Here is important information on how to use, handle, and store your medicine, what side effects to look for and how to manage them.

What it looks like: Film-coated, dark-yellow or brownish-orange scored tablets

How to handle and store:

- **There are special safe handling instructions for this medicine.** Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse about the precautions you need to follow when you take this medicine at home.
- Store in a closed container in a dry place such as a cabinet away from light, heat, and moisture.
- **Do not** store in your bathroom or refrigerator.
- Keep this medicine away from children and animals. **Do not** share it with anyone.

How to take:

- Swallow the tablet whole with a full glass of water at the same time each day. **Take this medicine with food.**
- If you are unable to swallow the tablet whole, talk to your health care team to learn how to dissolve the tablet safely.
- **Do not** take more tablets than ordered by your doctor.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember it. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose. **Do not double up on doses.**

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

Disposal:

- Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about how to get rid of prescription medicines safely.

Precautions:

- Tell your doctor or pharmacist about any medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and herbal products.
- **Do not get pregnant or breastfeed while on this medicine.** Talk with your doctor about what birth control to use.
- **Do not take St. John's Wort.**
- **Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice.** This can increase your risk of side effects.

Possible Side Effects

You can find more information on side effects in the Patient Education booklet, *Treatment with Chemotherapy and Anti-Cancer Medicines*.

Swelling/Fluid Retention

What this means: You may see swelling around your eyes or in your hands, feet or lower legs. You may also gain weight.

What to do:

- Call your doctor if you have any swelling or major weight gain.
- Call your doctor if you have shortness of breath.

Nausea and Vomiting

What to do:

- Eat small meals or snack often during the day. Stay away from spicy or high-fat foods.
- Drink water during the day.
- Call your doctor if you are unable to keep liquids down for more than 24 hours or if you feel lightheaded or dizzy.
- Call your doctor if your nausea makes you unable to take this medicine.

Muscle Pain

What to do:

- Talk to your doctor before you take any over-the-counter pain medicine.
- Drink water during the day.
- Get enough sleep.
- **Do not** lift heavy objects.
- Call your doctor if your muscle pain makes you unable to do your normal daily activities.

Rash

What to do:

- Call your doctor if you get a rash.
- Protect your skin and use sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) when you take this medicine.
- **Do not** use strong detergents or use strong soaps on areas with the rash.

Diarrhea

What to do:

- Drink extra fluids during the day.
- Call your doctor if this happens more than 4 times in a day, or lasts for more than 1 to 2 days or if you feel lightheaded or dizzy.

Low White Blood Cells/Preventing Infection

What to do:

- Call your doctor if you have a fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher.
- Wash your hands often.
- If you are told you have a low white blood cell count, stay away from people who are sick or do not feel well.

Bleeding/Bruising/Black Stools

What to do:

- Call your doctor if you have bruising, bleeding, black stools or sudden or severe stomach pain.
- **Do not** use aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve) for regular aches and pains.

This is not a complete list of all possible side effects. Tell your doctor if you have these or any other side effects that you think are caused by this medicine. Your James health care team can give you other tips for how to manage your side effects.