MSK Kids

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Imatinib

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Gleevec

Brand Names: Canada

ACH-Imatinib; APO-Imatinib; Gleevec; JAMP-Imatinib; MINT-Imatinib; NAT-Imatinib; PMS-Imatinib [DSC]; TEVA-Imatinib

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat cancer.
- It is used to treat blood problems.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell

the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.

- If your child is taking warfarin.
- If your child is taking any of these drugs: Carbamazepine, dexamethasone, phenobarbital, phenytoin, rifabutin, rifampin, or St. John's wort.

If your child is breast-feeding a baby:

- Be sure your child does not breast-feed a baby while taking this drug and for 1 month after stopping this drug.

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

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

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

- Tell all of your child’s health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child’s doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have your child avoid tasks or actions that call for alertness or clear eyesight until you see how this drug affects your child. These are things like riding a bike, playing sports, or using items such as scissors, lawnmowers, electric scooters, toy cars, or motorized vehicles.
- Your child may have more chance of getting infections. Have your child wash hands often. Avoid crowds and people with infections, colds, or flu.
- Your child may bleed more easily. Make sure your child is careful and avoids injury. Be sure your child has a soft toothbrush.
- If your child has an upset stomach or diarrhea, is throwing up, or decreased appetite, talk with the doctor. There may be ways to lower these side effects.
- If your child’s thyroid has been taken out, talk with the doctor. Your child may need to have blood work checked more closely.
- Talk with the doctor before your child gets any

vaccines. Use of some vaccines with this drug may either raise the chance of very bad infection or make the vaccine not work as well.

- Have your child’s blood work checked often. Talk with your child’s doctor.
- Your child may get sunburned more easily. Avoid lots of sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and dress your child in clothing and eyewear that protects from the sun.
- Avoid giving your child grapefruit and grapefruit juice.
- Very bad and sometimes deadly holes in the GI (gastrointestinal) tract have happened with this drug. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may affect growth in children and teens in some cases. They may need regular growth checks. Talk with the doctor.
- If your child is of childbearing age, a pregnancy test will need to be done before starting this drug to make sure your child is not pregnant.

If your child is or may be sexually active:

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if your child takes it during pregnancy.

- Have your child use birth control while taking this drug and for some time after the last dose. Ask the doctor how long your child must use birth control. If your child becomes pregnant, call the doctor right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child’s 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 child’s doctor or get medical help right away if your child has 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, swallowing, 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 or coughing up

blood; vomit that looks like coffee grounds; blood in the urine; black, red, or tarry stools; bleeding from the gums; abnormal vaginal bleeding; bruises without a cause or that get bigger; or bleeding you cannot stop.

- Signs of electrolyte problems like mood changes; confusion; muscle pain, cramps, or spasms; weakness; shakiness; change in balance; an abnormal heartbeat; seizures; loss of appetite; or severe 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.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Change in eyesight, eye pain, or severe eye irritation.
- Depression.
- Bone pain.
- This drug may cause your child to swell or keep fluid in the body. Tell your child’s doctor if swelling, weight gain, or trouble breathing happens after this drug is given.

- A severe skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause severe health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if your child has signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.
- Heart failure has happened with this drug, as well as heart failure that has gotten worse in people who already have it. Tell the doctor if your child has heart disease. Call the doctor right away if your child has 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.
- Severe and sometimes deadly liver problems have happened with this drug. Call your child’s doctor right away if your child has signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, 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 severe health problem called tumor lysis syndrome (TLS). This may lead to death. Call your child’s doctor right away if your child has a

fast or abnormal heartbeat; any passing out; trouble passing urine; muscle weakness or cramps; upset stomach, throwing up, diarrhea, or not able to eat; or feels sluggish.

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 child’s doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Hair loss.
- Constipation, diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Muscle spasm.
- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Headache.
- Gas.
- Dry skin.
- Watery eyes.
- Change in taste.
- Nose or throat irritation.

- Back, muscle, joint, arm, or leg pain.
- Weight gain.
- Night sweats.
- Anxiety.

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

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- Give with a meal.
- Give this drug 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 child's dose. Talk with the doctor. Put this drug in the water or apple juice and stir. Have your child drink right away after this drug has dissolved. Rinse cup with more water or juice and have your child drink.

- Give this drug at the same time of day.
- Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well.
- Have your child drink lots of noncaffeine liquids unless told to drink less liquid by your child's doctor.
- 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 my child misses a dose?

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

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

- Store at room temperature 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.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs.

There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your child’s symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child’s doctor.
- Do not share your child’s drug with others and do not give anyone else’s drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child’s 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.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice

or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2022-09-13

Copyright

© 2024 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Imatinib - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center