



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Fingolimod

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

Gilenya

## Brand Names: Canada

Gilenya

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat MS (multiple sclerosis).

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

- If you have an allergy to fingolimod 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 have ever had any of these health problems: Certain types of abnormal heartbeats (heart block, sick sinus syndrome, long QT on ECG), chest pain (angina), heart attack, heart failure, transient ischemic attack (TIA), or stroke.
- If you have had the varicella vaccine in the past month.
- If you are taking any drugs used for a heartbeat that is not normal.

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 until you see how this drug affects you.
- Slow heartbeat and a heartbeat that does not feel normal may happen when first starting this drug. Most of the time, this happens within 6 hours of your first dose. Sometimes, this can happen up to 24 hours after your first dose. Call your doctor right away if you have dizziness, slow heartbeat or a heartbeat that does not feel normal, or tiredness.
- You will need an ECG before starting this drug and during treatment. Talk with your doctor.
- You may have more chance of getting an infection while you take this drug and for 2 months after you stop it. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.
- Very bad and sometimes deadly infections have happened in patients who take this drug. If you have any infection, are taking antibiotics now or in the recent past, or have had many infections, talk with your doctor.
- Talk with your doctor before getting any vaccines while you take this drug and for 2 months after you stop it. Use with this drug may either raise the chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- When this drug is stopped, MS signs can come back and may be worse than before or during treatment. Many people do not go back to the same level of function they had before this drug was stopped. Most of the time, this effect happened in the first 12 weeks after stopping this drug but can happen later. If you stop this drug and your MS signs get worse, call your doctor right away.

- This drug may raise the chance of getting cancer like lymphoma or skin cancer. Call your doctor right away if you have a change in color or size of a mole, a skin lump or growth, a big weight loss, night sweats, or swollen glands.
- The chance of skin cancer may be raised. Avoid lots of sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and wear clothing and eyewear that protects you from the sun.
- Have your skin checked. Tell your doctor if you have any skin changes like a new wart, skin sore or reddish bump that bleeds or does not heal, or a change in the color or size of a mole.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant.
- Use birth control during treatment and for 2 months after your last dose.
- If you get pregnant while taking this drug or within 2 months after your last dose, call your doctor right away.
- Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about any risks to your baby.

## **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, 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 meningitis like headache with fever, stiff neck, upset stomach, confusion, or if lights bother the eyes.

- 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.
- Signs of high or low blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- Shortness of breath.
- Trouble breathing that is new or worse.
- Change in eyesight, eye pain, or very bad eye irritation.
- A very bad and sometimes deadly brain problem called posterior reversible encephalopathy syndrome (PRES) has happened with this drug. Call your doctor right away if you have signs like feeling confused, lowered alertness, change in eyesight, loss of eyesight, seizures, or very bad headache.
- A very bad brain problem called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) has happened with this drug. It may cause disability or can be deadly. Tell your doctor right away if you have signs like confusion, memory problems, low mood (depression), change in the way you act, change in strength on 1 side is greater than the other, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, or change in eyesight.

## **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:

- Headache.
- Flu-like signs.
- Diarrhea.
- Back pain.
- Pain in arms or legs.
- Stomach pain.
- Sinus pain.

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.

- The first dose is given in a doctor's office or hospital. This will also be done if you are starting this drug again after stopping it for some time. You will be watched for at least 6 hours after the first dose of this drug. Some people may need to be watched overnight. Before starting this drug, tell your doctor about all of your other drugs and health problems.
- Take with or without food.
- 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.
- Do not stop taking this drug without calling the doctor who ordered it for you.
- Check blood pressure and heart rate as the doctor has told you. Talk with the doctor.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- Have an eye exam as you have been told by your doctor.
- If you have not had chickenpox or a chickenpox vaccine, talk with your doctor.
- If you are not up to date with all of your vaccines, talk with your doctor. You may need to have some vaccines before treatment with this drug.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.

## **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?**

- Store in the original container 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.
- 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 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.

## **Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer**

This information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief

summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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