



## 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**

APO-Imatinib; Gleevec; NAT-Imatinib; PMS-Imatinib; 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 for your child to take this drug with all of his/her 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 is not hungry, talk with the doctor. There may be ways to lower these side effects.
- 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.
- 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 she is not pregnant.

**If your child is or may be sexually active:**

- Have your child use birth control to prevent pregnancy while taking this drug and for at least 2 weeks after stopping this drug.

### **If your child is pregnant:**

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if your child takes it during pregnancy.
- If your child gets pregnant while taking this drug or within 2 weeks after the last dose, 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 or weakness, a heartbeat that does not feel normal, seizures, not hungry, or very bad 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.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Very bad headache.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Change in eyesight.
- Low mood (depression).
- Bone pain.
- This drug may cause your child to swell or keep fluid in his/her body. Tell your child's doctor if he/she has swelling, weight gain, or trouble breathing after this drug is given.
- 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 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.
- Very bad 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, 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 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.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Muscle spasm.
- Headache.
- Belly pain.
- Joint pain.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Dizziness.
- Not able to sleep.
- Not hungry.
- Gas.
- Dry skin.
- Diarrhea.
- Constipation.
- Change in taste.
- Nose and throat irritation.
- 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 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.
- 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 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 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.

## **Last Reviewed Date**

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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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