

Imatinib

Care Team Contact Information: _____

Pharmacy Contact Information: _____

Diagnosis: _____

- This treatment is often used for many types of cancer.

Goal of Treatment: _____

- Treatment may continue for a certain time period, until it no longer works, or until side effects are no longer controlled.

Treatment Regimen

Treatment Name	How the Treatment Works	How the Treatment is Given
Imatinib (ih-MA-tih-nib): Gleevec (GLEE-vek)	Stops cancer cells from growing by blocking a protein that helps them survive.	Tablet(s) taken by mouth.

Treatment Administration and Schedule

Your imatinib dosing instructions:

- Imatinib comes in 2 tablet strength: 100 mg and 400 mg.
- Take imatinib with food and a large glass of water.
- Swallow imatinib tablets whole. Do not crush, cut, or dissolve the tablets.
- If you miss a dose of imatinib, take the next scheduled dose of imatinib at its regular time. Don't take 2 doses at once.
- If you take too much imatinib, call your care team or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.

Storage and Handling of Imatinib

- Store imatinib at room temperature between 68°F to 77°F in a dry location away from light.
- Keep imatinib out of the reach of children and pets.
- Whenever possible, give imatinib to yourself and follow the steps below. If someone else gives it to you, they must also follow these steps:
 1. Wash hands with soap and water.
 2. Put on gloves to avoid touching the medication. Note: Gloves are not needed if you give the drug to yourself.
 3. Transfer the imatinib from its package to a small medicine or other disposable cup.
 4. Administer the medicine immediately by mouth with water.
 5. Remove gloves, if used, and throw them and medicine cup in household trash.
 6. Wash hands with soap and water.
- If you plan to use a daily pill box or pill reminder, contact your care team before using it.
 - When the box or reminder is empty, wash it with soap and water before refilling.
 - The person refilling the box or reminder should:
 - Wear gloves. Note: Gloves are not needed if you are refilling it yourself.
 - Wash their hands with soap and water after completing the task, regardless of whether gloves were worn.
- Ask your care team how to safely throw away any unused imatinib. Do not throw it in the trash or flush it down the sink or toilet.

Appointments: Appointments may include regular check-ups with your care team, lab visits, and imaging tests. It's important to keep your appointments whenever you can. If you miss any appointments, call your care provider as soon as possible to reschedule your appointment.

Supportive Care to Prevent and Treat Side Effects

Description	Supportive Care Taken at Home
To help prevent or treat nausea and vomiting	
Other	

Common Side Effects

Side Effect	Important Information
Low White Blood Cell (WBC) Count and Increased Risk of Infection	<p>Description: WBCs help protect the body against infections. If you have a low WBC count, you may be at a higher risk of infection.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash your hands and bathe regularly. Avoid crowded places. Stay away from people who are sick. <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever of 100.4 °F (38°C) or higher Chills Cough Sore throat Painful urination Tiredness that is worse than normal Skin infections (red, swollen, or painful areas)
Low Platelet Count	<p>Description: Platelets help the blood clot and heal wounds. If you have low platelet counts, you are at a higher risk of bruising and bleeding.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blow your nose gently and avoid picking it. Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush and maintain good oral hygiene. Use an electric razor for shaving and a nail file instead of nail clippers. Avoid over-the-counter medications that may increase the risk of bleeding, such as NSAIDs. Talk with your care team or dentist before medical or dental procedures, as you may need to pause your treatment. <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nosebleed lasting over 5 minutes despite pressure Cut that continues to bleed Significant gum bleeding when flossing or brushing Severe headaches Blood in your urine or stool Blood in your spit after a cough
Low Red Blood Cell (RBC) Count and Hemoglobin (Hgb)	<p>Description: RBCs and Hgb help bring oxygen to your body's tissues and take away carbon dioxide. If you have low RBC counts or Hgb, you may feel weak, tired, or look pale.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night. Avoid operating heavy machinery when tired. Balance work and rest, staying active but resting when needed. <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortness of breath Dizziness Fast or abnormal heartbeats Severe headache

Fatigue	<p>Description: Fatigue is a constant and sometimes strong feeling of tiredness.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine exercise has been shown to decrease levels of fatigue. Work with your care team to find the right type of exercise for you. Ask your family and friends for help with daily tasks and emotional support. Try healthy ways to feel better, like meditation, writing in a journal, doing yoga, and using guided imagery to lower anxiety and feel good. Make a regular sleep schedule and limit naps during the day so you can sleep better at night, aiming for 7 to 8 hours of sleep. Don't use heavy machines or do things that need your full attention if you're very tired to avoid accidents. 	<p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tiredness that affects your daily life Tiredness all the time, and it doesn't get better with rest Dizziness and weakness, along with being tired
Swelling or Fluid Retention	<p>Description: Swelling and fluid retention can occur in different areas of the body, like the legs, feet, arms, hands, or around the eyes. You might notice areas feel puffy or tighter than usual.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep a daily log of swelling and note any changes in size or location. Elevate swollen limbs when resting. Limit salt intake. Stay active with regular, gentle exercises. Avoid prolonged periods of sitting or standing without movement. 	<p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swelling that suddenly worsens or spreads to other areas Pain, redness, or warmth in the affected area Signs of shortness of breath or difficulty breathing Swelling is persistent and does not improve with home management Unexpected weight gain <p>Note: Your care team may ask you to contact them if your weight increases by a certain amount over a certain time period.</p>
Stomach-Area (Abdominal) Pain	<p>Description: Abdominal pain is when you feel discomfort or pain in the belly area.</p> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe abdominal pain 	

Nausea and Vomiting	<p>Description: Nausea is an uncomfortable feeling in your stomach or the need to throw up. This may or may not cause vomiting.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat smaller, more frequent meals. • Avoid fatty, fried, spicy, or highly sweet foods. • Eat bland foods at room temperature and drink clear liquids. • If you vomit, start with small amounts of water, broth, or other clear liquids when you are ready to eat again. If that stays down, then try soft foods (such as gelatin, plain cornstarch pudding, yogurt, strained soup, or strained cooked cereal). Slowly work up to eating solid food. • Your care team may prescribe medicine for these symptoms. 	<p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vomiting for more than 24 hours • Vomiting that's nonstop • Signs of dehydration (like feeling very thirsty, having a dry mouth, feeling dizzy, or having dark urine) • Blood or coffee-ground-like appearance in your vomit • Bad stomach pain that doesn't go away after vomiting
Diarrhea	<p>Description: Diarrhea is when you have loose, watery bowel movements more often than usual. The need to use the bathroom may occur urgently.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep track of how many times you go to the bathroom each day. • Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water or other fluids every day, unless your care team tells you otherwise. • Eat small meals of mild, low-fiber foods like bananas, applesauce, potatoes, chicken, rice, and toast. • Avoid eating foods with high fiber (like raw vegetables, fruits, and whole grains), foods that cause gas (like broccoli and beans), dairy foods (like yogurt and milk), and spicy, fried, and greasy foods. • Your care team may recommend medicine (such as loperamide) for diarrhea. 	<p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 or more bowel movements than normal in 24 hours • Dizziness or lightheadedness while having diarrhea • Bloody diarrhea
Liver Problems	<p>Description: Treatment can harm your liver. This may cause nausea, stomach pain, and bleeding or bruising. It can also turn your skin and eyes yellow and make your urine dark. Lab tests may be performed to monitor liver function.</p> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes • Severe nausea or vomiting • Pain on the right side of your stomach area (abdomen) • Dark urine (tea colored) • Bleeding or bruising more easily than normal 	

Headache	<p>Description: A headache can cause you to feel pain or discomfort in your head, making it hard to concentrate or feel your best.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep a headache diary to track the frequency, duration, intensity, and triggers of your headaches. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water, as dehydration can contribute to headaches. Apply a cold or warm compress to your forehead or neck to help ease headache pain. Get adequate sleep (7-8 hours per night) and establish a regular sleep schedule. Limit caffeine intake. Your care team may recommend medicine for headaches. <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe headache More frequent headaches Dizziness or light-headedness Confusion Vision changes
Muscle, Bone, and Joint Pain	<p>Description: Muscle pain feels like soreness, aches, cramps, or stiffness in one or more muscles. It may also include tenderness or weakness. Joint pain happens where two bones come together and can feel sharp, dull, throbbing, or burning. It often causes stiffness, swelling, and difficulty moving.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track your pain levels, areas of discomfort, and any activities that worsen or improve your symptoms. Engage in gentle exercises like walking, stretching, or yoga to maintain mobility and strength, but consult your care team before starting any new exercise routine. Apply a warm compress to relax stiff muscles or use cold packs to reduce swelling and numb pain in affected areas. Your care team may prescribe or recommend medications, including over-the-counter pain relievers. <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncontrolled muscle or joint pain Swelling, redness, or warmth in the joints Weakness Difficulty walking or moving

Rash or Itchy Skin	<p>Description: Rash or itching skin can cause symptoms like redness, swelling, and varying bumps, such as small red spots, welts, or patches.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Keep your skin moisturized with creams or lotions to reduce rash and itchiness; wear loose-fitting clothing.Avoid perfumes and colognes, as they may worsen rash symptoms.Limit time spent in heat to prevent worsening symptoms.Avoid sun exposure, especially between 10 AM and 4 PM, to lower the risk of sunburn.Wear long-sleeved clothing with UV protection and broad-brimmed hats.Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen (UVA/UVB) with at least SPF 30 as directed.Use lip balm that contains at least SPF 30.Avoid tanning beds.Your care team may recommend medicines for symptoms. <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Rash or itching that continues to worsen
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Select Rare Side Effects

Side Effect	Talk to Your Care Team if You Have Any of These Signs or Symptoms	
Heart Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swelling of your stomach-area (abdomen), legs, hands, feet, or ankles Shortness of breath Nausea or vomiting New or worsening chest discomfort, including pain or pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weight gain Pain or discomfort in your arms, back, neck, or jaw Protruding neck veins Breaking out in a cold sweat Feeling lightheaded or dizzy
Kidney Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swelling of your face or ankles Blood in your urine or dark-colored urine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You urinate less than usual
Thyroid Gland Problems	<p>Low thyroid levels (hypothyroidism) have been reported in people what have had their thyroids removed and are receiving levothyroxine replacement during treatment with imatinib. Your care team may do a blood test to monitor your thyroid levels during treatment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extreme tiredness Feeling hot or cold Your voice gets deeper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weight gain or loss Hair loss
Tumor Lysis Syndrome (TLS)	<p>Tumor lysis happens when cancer cells break apart and flood your bloodstream with chemicals and toxins faster than your body can get rid of them. TLS is a group of conditions that affect your heart, kidneys, and muscles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea Urinating smaller amounts or dark-colored urine Muscle cramps or twitching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid heartbeats or chest pain Confusion or weakness

**Before starting treatment, ask your care team when to call 9-1-1 or seek emergency help.
If you experience any new, worsening, or uncontrolled side effects, contact your care team immediately.**

Intimacy, Pregnancy, and Breastfeeding

- Treatment may **change how you feel about intimacy and your body**. However, physical closeness—such as holding hands and hugging—remains safe. It is common to have questions about intimacy. If needed, talk to your care team for guidance.
- Treatment may **harm an unborn baby**.
 - If you are able to become pregnant, take a pregnancy test before starting treatment.
 - Use an effective method of birth control during treatment and for 14 days after your last dose.
 - If you think you might be pregnant or if you become pregnant, tell your care team right away.
 - If your partner(s) could become pregnant, use an effective method of birth control—such as condoms—during treatment.
- **Do NOT breastfeed** during treatment and for 1 month after your last dose.

Handling Body Fluids and Waste

Some drugs you receive may stay in your urine, stool, sweat, or vomit for many days after treatment. Because many cancer drugs are toxic, your body waste may also be dangerous to touch. To help protect yourself, your loved ones, and the environment, **follow these instructions** for at least **4 days** after each dose of **imatinib**:

- People who are pregnant should avoid touching anything that may be soiled with body fluids from the patient.
- You can use your usual toilet. Always close the lid and flush to discard all waste. If you have a low-flow toilet, flush twice.
- If the toilet or seat is soiled with urine, stool, or vomit, clean the surface after each use before others use it.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet.
- If you need a bedpan, inform your caregiver so they can wear gloves and assist with cleanup. Wash the bedpan with soap and water daily.
- If you cannot control your bladder or bowels, use a disposable pad with a plastic back, a diaper, or a sheet to absorb waste.
- Wash any skin exposed to body waste with soap and water.
- Wash soiled linens or clothing separately from other laundry. If you don't have a washer, place them in a plastic bag until they can be washed.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after touching soiled linens or clothing.

Additional Information

- **Tell your care team about all the medicines you take.**

This includes prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and herbal products. Before starting any new medicine, supplement, or vaccine, ask your care team first.

- **This Patient Education Sheet may not describe all possible side effects.**

Call your healthcare provider for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

Notes

Updated Date: January 8, 2026

Scan the QR code below to access this education sheet.



Important notice: The Association of Cancer Care Centers (ACCC), Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association (HOPA), Network for Collaborative Oncology Development & Advancement, Inc. (NCODA), and Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) have collaborated in gathering information for and developing this patient education guide. This guide represents a brief summary of the medication derived from information provided by the drug manufacturer and other resources.

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