

Medication Information Sheet

cetuximab (se-TUX-i-mab)

This document provides general information about your medication. It does not replace the advice of your health care professional. Always discuss your therapy with your health care professional and refer to the package insert for more details.

Other Name: Erbitux®

Appearance: Clear, colorless solution

What is this medication for?

For treating colorectal or head and neck cancer

What should I do before I have this medication?

- Tell your doctor if you have or had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have or had:
 - a history of heart problems (including irregular heartbeat or heart failure),
 - if you have eye problems or use contact lenses,
 - or if you have any allergies.
- People with cancer have a higher risk of getting other cancers or developing blood clots. Some cancer medications may increase these risks, especially if used for a long period of time. Discuss any concerns about this medication with your health care team.

How will this medication affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?

- The use of this medication in men or women may cause harm to the unborn baby if pregnancy occurs. Let your health care team know if you or your partner is pregnant, becomes pregnant during treatment, or if you are breastfeeding.
- If there is ANY chance that you or your partner may become pregnant, you and your partner together must: ► **Use 2 effective forms of birth control at the same time** while taking this drug: Keep using birth control until **6 months** after the last dose. Discuss with your healthcare team.
- Do not breastfeed while taking this drug and for a minimum of **60 days** after treatment ends.
- We do not know if this medication affects fertility (ability to get pregnant).

*The most updated version and more symptom control information can be found on: <http://www.cancercare.on.ca/druginfo>

Prepared with input from the Cancer Care Ontario-Medication Information Sheets Working Group.

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How is this medication given?

- This drug is given by injection into a vein.
- You may be given drug(s) before cetuximab to prevent a reaction.

What else do I need to know while on this medication?

- This medication can interact with other medications and can result in the treatment not working as well or cause severe side effects.
- Make sure your health care team knows about all your medications (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals and supplements). Check with your health care team before starting or stopping any of them.
- For mild aches and pain:
 - You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets. Ask your health care team about the right dose for you.
 - Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid, ASA), including low dose aspirin for heart conditions, may increase your chance of bleeding.
 - Talk to your health care team before you start or stop these medications.
 - If you feel unwell, take your temperature before taking any of these medications. They may hide a fever.
 - **Talk to your health care team or go to the closest emergency room right away if you have a fever.** See the [Fever](#) pamphlet for more information.
- Drinking alcohol and smoking during your treatment may increase some side effects and make your medication less effective. Speak to your health care team about smoking and drinking alcohol while on treatment.

What are the side effects of this medication?

You may not have all of the side effects below. You may have side effects that are not listed.

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
Very Common Side Effects (50 or more out of 100 people)	
<p>Rash; dry, itchy skin</p> <p>Rash may be severe in some rare cases and cause your skin to blister or peel. If this happens, get emergency medical help right away.</p> <p>To prevent and treat dry skin,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use skin moisturizer. • Protect your skin from the sun and the cold. • Use sunscreen with UVA and UVB protection and a SPF of at least 30. 	<p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p>Fatigue (tiredness)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be active and aim to get 30 minutes of moderate exercise (you are able to talk comfortably while exercising) on most days. Check with your health care team before starting any new exercise. • Pace yourself, do not rush. Put off less important activities. Rest when you need to. • Eat well and stay hydrated by drinking at least 6 to 8 glasses of water or other liquids every day (unless your doctor told you to drink more or less). • Avoid driving or using machinery if you are feeling tired <p>See our Fatigue pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p>Low appetite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may not feel like eating or you may lose weight. • Try to eat foods that you like and eat small meals throughout the day. • You may need to take meal supplements to help keep your weight up. • Talk to your health care team if you have a low appetite. • See our Loss of appetite pamphlet for more information. 	<p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p>Nausea and vomiting</p> <p>May occur in hours to days after your treatment.</p> <p>If you have nausea or vomiting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take anti-nausea medication(s) as prescribed to you by your doctor. • Drink clear liquids and have small meals. Get fresh air and rest. • Do not eat spicy, fried foods or foods with a strong smell. • Limit caffeine (e.g. coffee, tea) and alcohol. • Contact your health care team if the prescribed anti-nausea medications are not helping to control your nausea and vomiting. <p>Also see Nausea & Vomiting pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Contact your healthcare team if no improvement or if severe</p>

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Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
Very Common Side Effects (50 or more out of 100 people)	
<p>Pains or cramps in the belly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have constipation or diarrhea it may be causing the pain in your belly. • If the pain is severe, gets worse or doesn't go away, talk to your health care team about other possible causes. 	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p>Constipation</p> <p>To help prevent constipation :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink more liquids and eat well. Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day unless you have been told otherwise. • Be Active. Exercise can help to keep you regular. • Try to eat more fiber (e.g. fruits with skin, leafy greens and whole grains). If you take opioid pain medication, ask your health care team if eating more fibre is right for you. <p>To help treat constipation :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have not had a bowel movement in 2 to 3 days you may need to take a laxative. Ask your health care team what to do. <p>See the Constipation Pamphlet for more information.</p>	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
<p>Tingling, numb fingers and toes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May slowly get better after your treatment ends. • Contact your health care team if you have trouble doing up buttons, writing, picking up small objects, have pain or trouble moving. 	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p>Cough; feeling short of breath (rarely may be severe)</p> <p>You may have cough and feel short of breath without any signs of infection, such as a sore throat or a stuffed nose.</p>	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
Get emergency help if severe or you are coughing up blood.	
<p>Salt imbalances</p> <p>It may cause muscle twitching, severe weakness or cramping, confusion and irregular heartbeat.</p>	Get emergency medical help right away
<p>Fever, chills, infection (may be severe)</p> <p>You have a fever if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time OR • 38.0°C (or 100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour. <p>While you are getting chemotherapy treatments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep a digital thermometer at home and take your temperature if you feel hot or unwell (for example, chills). • Avoid taking medications that treat a fever before you take your temperature (for example, Tylenol®, acetaminophen, Advil® or ibuprofen) as they may hide a fever. • Do not eat or drink anything hot or cold right before taking your temperature. • Wash your hands often. • Check with your doctor before getting any vaccines, surgeries, medical procedures or visiting your dentist. <p>If you have a fever, talk to your health care team or go to the closest emergency room.</p> <p>See our Neutropenia (Low white blood cell count) pamphlet for more information.</p>	Get emergency medical help right away
<p>Diarrhea</p> <p>May happen days to weeks after you get your treatment.</p> <p>If you have diarrhea :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take anti-diarrhea medication if your health care team prescribed it. • Avoid foods or drinks with artificial sweetener (e.g. chewing gum, “diet” drinks), coffee and alcohol. • Eat many small meals and snacks instead of 2 or 3 large meals. • Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day. Talk to your health care team if you can’t drink 6-8 cups of liquids each day when you have diarrhea. You may need special liquids with salt and sugar, called Oral Rehydration Therapy. 	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe

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Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
See the Diarrhea pamphlet for more information.	
<p>Headache</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your pain medication as prescribed by your doctor. • You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets as needed for mild aches and pains. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the right dose for you. • Talk to your doctor or pharmacist first before taking ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin. These medication may increase bleeding risk. • Rest often and try light exercise as it may help. 	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p>Mouth sores</p> <p>You may have round, painful, white or gray sores inside your mouth. They can occur on the tongue, lips, gums, or inside your cheeks. In more severe cases they may make it hard swallow, eat or to brush your teeth. They usually last 1 to 2 weeks.</p> <p>To help prevent mouth sores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take care of your mouth by gently brushing and flossing regularly. • Rinse your mouth often. Do not use mouthwashes with alcohol. • Instead, try a homemade mouthwash: • Mix 1 teaspoonful of baking soda and 1 teaspoonful of salt in 4 cups (1L) of water. <p>If you have mouth sores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check with your health care team as soon as you notice mouth or lip sores or if it hurts to swallow. • Avoid hot, spicy, acidic, hard or crunchy foods.. Your doctor may prescribe a mouthwash to relieve mouth sores and prevent infection. <p>See the Mouth Care pamphlet for more information.</p>	Contact your health care team as soon as possible
<p>Trouble falling asleep</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may be caused by one of your medications and may improve once your body gets used to the medication or when your treatment ends. • Talk to your doctor if this bothers you. 	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p>Nail changes</p> <p>You may have changes in nail colour, pain or tenderness in the nailbed, swelling of cuticles, or loosening of nails.</p>	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
Common Side Effects (25 to 49 out of 100 people)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will slowly return to normal after treatment ends. • Use a moisturizer for nails and cuticles. • Avoid nail polish and artificial fingernails until your nails have returned to normal. • Wear gloves when doing house chores or gardening. 	

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
<p>Allergic reaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most common symptoms include fever, flushing, itchiness, rash, swollen lips, face or tongue, wheezing, chest and throat tightness. • It may occur during or shortly after the medication is given to you. Let your health care team know right away if this happens to you. • You may be given medicines to prevent or treat this reaction 	Get emergency medical help right away
<p>Mood changes</p> <p>To help with mood changes :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating well and exercising may give you more energy and help you feel better. Always check with your health care team before starting a new exercise program to make sure it is safe for you. • Have good sleeping habits. • Get support from your family, friends, community and health care team. <p>Talk to your doctor if this persists or bothers you.</p>	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p>Dry mouth</p> <p>To help prevent and treat dry mouth :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use sugar-free gum or lozenges (e.g. contains xylitol) to help you make saliva. • Rinse your mouth with a homemade mouth rinse (1 teaspoon of salt and 1 teaspoon of baking soda in 4 cups of water) every 1 to 2 hours • Suck on ice chips or sugarless popsicles to help relieve dry mouth. • Spray your mouth with water or artificial saliva products (e.g., Moi-Stir 	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe

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Less Common Side Effects (10 to 24 out of 100 people)	
<p>Spray®, Biotene® products) as needed to keep it moist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to your health care team about the right product for you. <p>See our Mouth Care pamphlet for more information.</p>	
<p>Mild joint, muscle pain or cramps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your pain medication as prescribed by your doctor. • You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets as needed for mild aches and pains. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the right dose for you. • Talk to your doctor or pharmacist first before taking ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin. These medication may increase bleeding risk. • Rest often and try light exercise as it may help. 	<p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p>Abnormal liver lab tests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may have yellowish skin or eyes, unusually dark pee or pain on the right side of your belly. Talk to your health care team if this happens. • Your doctor may monitor your liver regularly with a blood test. 	<p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>
<p>Dizziness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may feel light headed. • Lay down if this happens. • Get up and move slowly once you feel better. • Do not drive a motor vehicle or use machinery if you feel dizzy. 	<p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>

Other rare, but serious side effects are possible.

If you experience ANY of the following, speak to your cancer health care provider or get emergency medical help right away:

- Unusual bruising or bleeding such as black stools (poo), blood in your pee, purple or red dots on your skin, or bleeding that will not stop
- Any changes in your vision / eyesight
- Sudden, severe belly pain (may extend to your back), bloating or feeling of fullness
- Pain, swelling and hardening of the vein in an arm or leg
- Feeling confused or having trouble speaking or using your arms or legs
- Signs of a kidney problem such as swelling, passing very little or no pee, or new unusual weight gain

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For more links on how to manage your symptoms go to www.cancercare.on.ca/symptoms.

The information set out in the medication information sheets, regimen information sheets, and symptom management information (for patients) contained in the Drug Formulary (the "Formulary") is intended to be used by health professionals and patients for informational purposes only. The information is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, drug interactions or side effects of a certain drug, nor should it be used to indicate that use of a particular drug is safe, appropriate or effective for a given condition.

A patient should always consult a healthcare provider if he/she has any questions regarding the information set out in the Formulary. The information in the Formulary is not intended to act as or replace medical advice and should not be relied upon in any such regard. All uses of the Formulary are subject to clinical judgment and actual prescribing patterns may not follow the information provided in the Formulary.

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