



Understanding your treatment with Tarceva[®] (erlotinib)



What is Tarceva?

Tarceva (also known as erlotinib) is used to treat advanced or metastatic (spreading) Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC). Tarceva may be given:

- as the first treatment, if your cancer has specific mutations in a protein called epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR)
- or
- later on when the initial chemotherapy has not worked.

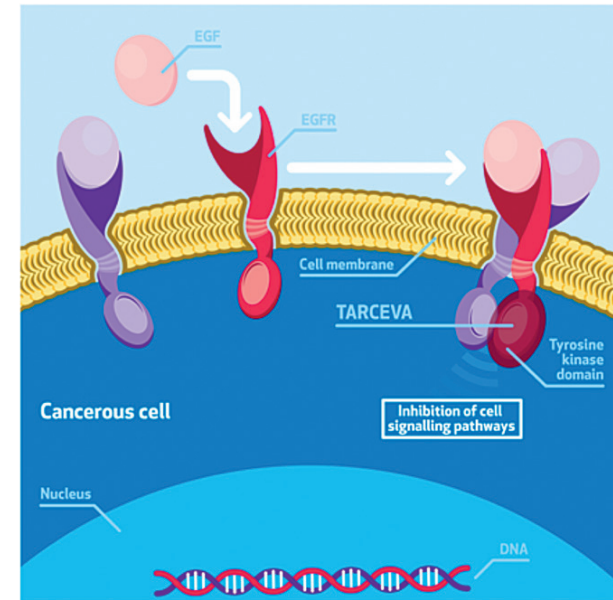
How to take Tarceva

Tarceva is a tablet, which you take once a day. Unless you have been told to do otherwise, swallow the tablet whole on an empty stomach (at least 1 hour **before** or 2 hours **after** eating) as food may affect how well your body absorbs Tarceva. If you forget to take your tablet, do not take an extra dose. Carry on as normal and take your next tablet at the usual time. Continue taking Tarceva until your doctor tells you to stop.

How does Tarceva work?

Tarceva works by preventing the activity of a protein called epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR). Some cancers have

specific mutations (changes) in the EGFR protein. This results in an increase in chemical signalling in the cells which leads to faster cell growth and division, and spread of cancer.



Tarceva works by binding to a specific region of EGFR, known as tyrosine kinase. By doing so, it stops cell signalling pathways which are responsible for the growth of the cancer, as well as decreasing the survival of existing cancer cells.

Tarceva Side effects

Most medicines can produce unwanted reactions, called side effects, which are often related to the way the medicine works. Tarceva works by interfering with EGFR found on cancer cells. EGFR is also important in maintaining skin, nail and hair health. Most patients will have side effects from Tarceva but in many cases they will be mild. Common side effects include **skin** rashes, **nail** and **hair** changes, dry eyes and **diarrhoea**. A less common side effect of Tarceva is a sudden onset of new or progressively worsening breathing difficulties, associated with cough or fever. These symptoms may indicate interstitial lung disease and you should contact your treating team immediately.

Skin, hair and nail changes

You may experience a rash after starting Tarceva treatment. The rash may occur at any time but often starts about 2 weeks after beginning therapy. The rash usually affects the upper body including the face, neck and scalp. It is generally mild and looks spotty. However it may look like acne or dermatitis when more severe.

At times, your scalp may become itchy, dry and irritable and hair may change in texture and grow more quickly than usual.

Your nails may become thin and more prone to cracking. Skin infections can also occur and may be painful if they occur around the fingers and toes. You may also experience mouth ulcers.

Managing the side effects of Tarceva

From your first day of treatment with Tarceva you should look after your skin, hair and nails.

Wash with luke-warm water and keep your shower and bath time to a minimum. Use a pH-balanced, soap-free, moisturising cleanser for washing your face and body. Alternatively bathe in non-fragranced bath oils.

Use moisturising lotion, creams and ointments for dry or irritated skin.
Ask your doctor or nurse to recommend suitable skin care products for you.

Lotions: Moisturising lotions are light, spread easily and soak in quickly and are a good starting choice for slightly dry skin. Start by using once a day after washing, straight after patting your skin dry to help seal in the moisture. Use twice a day if your skin is irritable and itchy. A good time for the second application is an hour or so before going to bed.

Creams: Use moisturising creams if your skin still feels dry or irritated despite using a moisturising lotion regularly and/or during cold dry winter months when skin is dryer than normal. They are also good for treating skin problems on the hands and feet.

Ointments: Ointments are good for very dry skin during the colder, dry months. They are heavier and do not spread as easily and take longer to soak into the skin.

Taking care of your scalp

Wash your hair regularly using mild shampoos. Consider using a medicated shampoo if your scalp is easily irritated or dry. Washing using just the conditioner to wash the hair every second time, cleanses the hair and scalp without drying it out.

Protecting your skin from the sun

Heat and perspiration may worsen your skin symptoms. Try to stay out of the sun as much as possible and wear a sunscreen. Sunscreens should contain broad UVA and UVB protection. Keep cool, wear light natural fabrics and wear a hat to protect your head and face from the sun.

Looking after your hands and feet

Wear protective gloves for wet or potentially damaging activities, e.g. gardening, or washing dishes (avoid harsh detergents). Trim nails horizontally and not too short. Apply a thin amount of cream to hands and feet regularly, including just before going to bed. Consult your doctor or nurse if cracks develop on your hands or feet.

How to choose make-up

Foundation can still be safely used whilst on Tarceva. Choose an oil-free, dermatologist-recommended product. For removing make-up, use a dermatologist recommended, soap-free cleanser.

Looking after your lips and mouth

Use a lip-balm containing both moisturiser and sunscreen. Regular dental care is important. For tender or sore gums, brushing gently with a soft toothbrush and using sodium bicarbonate mouthwash may be useful.

Contact your medical team if you have worrying symptoms or if they are not settling with these measures.

Dry or gritty eyes

Always wear sunglasses when outside and consider using lubricating eye drops for dry irritated eyes such as artificial tears.

Diarrhoea

If you suffer from diarrhoea while taking Tarceva, drink plenty of fluids and consult your medical team as soon as possible. Your doctor may prescribe a medicine to help treat diarrhoea.

Shortness of breath

Consult your medical team as soon as possible if you develop a sudden onset of new or progressively worsening breathing difficulties, associated with cough or fever. These symptoms may indicate interstitial lung disease.

Always make sure you keep your doctor and medical team informed of any side effects you might be experiencing.

Contact Info:

Cancer Society of NZ
www.cancernz.org.nz
0800 226 237



Tarceva® (erlotinib), 150mg, 100mg and 25mg tablets, is a **Prescription Medicine** used for the treatment of advanced or metastatic (spreading) non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). Tarceva can be given before or after initial chemotherapy if your cancer has specific mutations in a protein called epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR). It can also be given later on when chemotherapy has not worked.

Do not use Tarceva if: you are allergic to erlotinib or any ingredients in Tarceva.

Tell your doctor if: you are pregnant or breast-feeding, or plan to become pregnant or breast-feed, you have liver or kidney problems, you have had stomach ulcers or inflammation of the bowel wall, you are a smoker, you cannot tolerate lactose, or you are taking any other medicines.

Tell your doctor immediately or go to your nearest Accident and Emergency Centre if you notice any of the following: sudden onset of shortness of breath or difficulty breathing with cough and/or fever; severe or persistent diarrhoea, nausea or vomiting; severe stomach pain or discomfort; vomiting blood or bleeding from your back passage; tongue and/or facial swelling; hives or wheezing; blisters on the skin, especially in the nose, eyes and mouth; red or purple rash that spreads, accompanied by fever and chills, aching muscles and generally feeling unwell; yellowing of the skin and eyes or dark coloured urine.

Serious side effects may include: infection with fever or chills; mouth irritation, sore mouth, mouth ulcers or cold sores; persistent cough. **Possible common side effects may also include:** diarrhoea; loss of appetite or weight loss; nausea or vomiting; dehydration; stomach pain or discomfort or belching after eating; difficulty in breathing; tiredness; rash; itching; dry skin; acne; tear in the skin; folliculitis (infection of hair follicles); unusual hair loss or thinning; eye irritation, inflammation or infection; nose bleeds; infection of nail bed or swelling around the nails; headache; fever; rigors or shaking; depression; or numbness or weakness of the arms and legs.

Tarceva has risks and benefits. Ask your doctor if Tarceva is right for you. Use strictly as directed. If symptoms continue or you have side effects, see your healthcare professional. For further information on Tarceva, please talk to your health professional or visit www.medsafe.govt.nz for Tarceva Consumer Medicine Information.

Tarceva (150mg and 100mg tablets) is a funded medicine for patients with NSCLC who meet pre- defined criteria. A prescription charge and normal doctor's fees apply.

Consumer panel dated 14.04.2019

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