Cetuximab (se TUX see mab)
Patient Education

US Brand Names: Erbitux
Therapeutic Category: monoclonal antibody, targeted therapy

What is this medicine used for?
Used to treat cancer. More specifically this particular drug is used to treat colon, rectal, and head & neck cancers.

How does it work?
Monoclonal antibodies (MoAbs) such as Cetuximab react with certain markers on the surface of a cell in your body. This medicine can be made to target (targeted therapy) a marker on a certain type of cancer cell and kill it or stop its growth. Some MoAbs will affect a cancer cell and some normal cells that have the same marker as the cancer cell. Cetuximab targets the epidermal growth factor receptors (EGFR) on the surface of cell in your body. This receptor is present on many types of cancer cells. EGFR is also present on epidermal cells in your body.

What should my doctor or nurse know before I take this medication?

- If you are allergic to any medicines.
- If you are taking other over the counter or prescription medicines, including vitamins and herbal remedies.
- If you are, or may be pregnant.
- If you are breast feeding.

How is this drug given?

- This medicine can be used alone or in combination with other cancer medicine.
- This medicine is given into a vein.

What are the general precautions when taking this medicine?

- Talk with your doctor or nurse before taking aspirin, aspirin-containing products, over the counter, or prescription medications, including vitamins and herbal remedies.
- Drink 8 to 10 glasses of non-caffeinated liquid every day (unless told otherwise by your doctor or nurse).
- If you or your partner can get pregnant, use birth control during your treatment. Once completing treatment, discuss the timing for discontinuing birth control measures with your provider (See Patient Teaching Sheet: Fertility)
What are the common side effects of this medicine?

- Blemishes or acne-like rash on your skin. Limit sun exposure and use sunblock.
- Weakness
- Fever
- Headache
- Diarrhea or difficulty having a bowel movement.
- Allergic reactions not common but can occur during the first infusion.

Danger signals to report immediately to your doctor or nurse:

- Signs or symptoms of infection. This include a fever of 100.4 F (38 C) or greater, chills, severe sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, increased sputum or change in color, painful urination, mouth sores, wound that will not heal, or anal itching or pain.
- Severe nausea or vomiting or diarrhea not controlled by medication.
- Not able to eat or drink.
- Bleeding from your nose, mouth, gums, or in your urine or bowel movements.
- Bruising that does not heal.
- Feeling extremely tired, weak, dizzy or light headed.
- Go to your nearest emergency room for signs of a life-threatening reaction: wheezing, chest tightness, fever, itching, bad cough, blue skin color, seizures, or swelling of face, lips, tongue or throat.

Prepared by the Oncology Nursing Committee 10/04.
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