Sunitinib (su NIT e nib)
Patient Education

US Brand Names: Sutent
Therapeutic Category: targeted therapy

What is this medicine used for?
- Used to treat cancer. More specifically this particular drug is used to treat gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GIST) and advanced renal carcinoma.

How does it work?
- Targeted therapy such as Sunitinib reacts with certain proteins on the surface of a cell in your body. This medicine can be made to target a protein on certain types of cancer cells. Some targeted therapies will affect a cancer cell and/or normal cells.

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.
- If you have heart disease.

How is this drug given?
- This medicine can be used alone or in combination with other cancer medicine.
- This medicine is given by mouth.

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 *(i.e. antihypertensive medicine), including vitamins and herbal remedies.
- Drink 8 to10 glasses of non-caffeinated liquid every day (unless told otherwise by your doctor or nurse).
- Take this medication with or without food.
- Avoid eating or drinking grapefruit juice, or St John’s wort as long as you are taking Sunitinib.
What are the common side effects of this medicine?

Most common side effects are:

- Fatigue.
- Hand and foot syndrome: skin rash, redness, numbness, tingling, painful swelling, & blistering.
- Increase in your blood pressure (hypertension). Your blood pressure will be monitored while you are taking this medication.
- Loss of color in your skin or hair, and rash.
- Decreased wound healing.
- May cause bleeding of your mucous membranes: nose, gums, stomach, or rectal area.
- May cause heart abnormalities. Your heart function will be monitored while you are taking this medication.
- Myelosuppression (drop in number of blood cells).
  May cause a drop in the number of white blood cells in your body. These cells fight infection. A drop in the number of these cells puts you at risk for infection (Neutropenia). You may be at an increased risk for getting an infection during your treatment. Talk to your doctor or nurse about your risk. Practice good hand washing and avoid people with infections, colds or flu when you are at risk. (pt. teaching sheet Neutropenia)

  May cause a drop in the number of platelets in your body (thrombocytopenia). Platelets help your blood clot. A drop in platelets puts you at risk for bleeding. You may bleed easily during your treatment. Talk to your doctor or nurse about your risk. Avoid injury to your skin and mucous membranes by using a soft toothbrush, electric razor, etc when you are at risk. (pt. teaching sheet thrombocytopenia)

  May cause a drop in the number of your red blood cells in your body. Red blood cells carry oxygen throughout your body. This drop in red blood cells may lead to you feeling tired/fatigued (Anemia). Talk to your doctor or nurse about your risk. (pt. teaching sheet fatigue)

Danger signals to report immediately to your doctor or nurse:

- Signs or symptoms of infection. This includes 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, anal itching or pain, pain in your heels that prevent you from walking.
- 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.

How should I store this medicine?

- Keep all medicine out of reach of children and pets.
- Consult your pharmacist for instructions on storage and disposal of this medication.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

Contact your doctor or nurse. Do not make up a skipped dose without discussing with your health care team.