

Caring for Your Skin and Nails While Taking Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor (EGFR) Inhibitors

Rash

This is a common dermatologic side effect of treatment with EGFR inhibitors. The rash usually occurs within the first 2 weeks of therapy and is most pronounced during this time. It lessens over time and usually improves 1 to 2 months after ending therapy.

If you get the rash, it does NOT mean that you are having an allergic reaction to therapy and it is NOT caused by an infection.

The rash occurs in about 90% of patients and usually occurs on the face, upper chest and back and less often on the arms and legs. The rash may look like acne, but is not the same as acne. The rash may cause itchiness and discomfort.

The following suggestions may be helpful in caring for your skin:

- Stay well hydrated, drinking 8 eight ounce glasses of water daily.
- Antihistamines may be helpful in treating itch (Benadryl or Claritin).
- Avoid sun exposure as this may worsen the rash.
- Use sun screen and wear a hat when outdoors.
- Wear loose fitting clothing to prevent further irritation from the rash.
- Take any medications your doctor has prescribed for the rash such as oral and/or topical antibiotics.
- Head and Shoulders shampoo can be used to clean the skin and scalp.
- Do not use cleansers or moisturizers that contain perfume (good choices are Cetaphil or Eucerin).
- You may use concealing make up; it should not worsen the rash.
- Acne agents should not be used as it is a dry skin rash and acne treatments will dry the skin more, and make the rash worse .

Nail changes

Certain changes in texture, integrity, and strength of the nails on both your hands and feet can occur while you are being treated with EGFR inhibitors. Redness and swelling in the skin around the nail, along with cracked cuticles, occur most frequently in fingers, particularly in thumbs and in the big toes.

The changes develop in 4 to 8 weeks after the start of treatment. The changes usually wax and wane during treatment and generally resolve after completion of therapy. The nails may become infected because of skin cracks and fissures and care should be taken to keep these areas clean, moisturized, and protected. Topical antibiotics are effective in treating most skin infections associated with nail changes.

The following suggestions may be helpful in caring for your nails:

- Stay well hydrated, drinking 8 eight ounce glasses of water daily.
- Do not irritate fingers and nails: avoid frequent water immersion or harsh chemicals.
- Keep fingers and toes well moisturized (ointments and petroleum jelly work well); covering your hands and feet in Vaseline and then covering them with clean cotton socks and/or cotton gloves is effective.
- Wear protective coverings on your feet to minimize friction and pressure on the nail bed.
- Soak and cushion the affected area to bring symptom relief (for example Domeboro can reduce swelling and pain).
- Clean and disinfect the areas frequently to avoid infection.

For more information feel free to visit the website chemocare.com