



Lung Cancer Patients and Skin Side Effects from Tarceva

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Scott J. Antonia, MD, PhD

Program Leader, Thoracic Oncology
Moffitt Cancer Center

David P. Carbone, MD, PhD

Director, James Thoracic Center, James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute
Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center

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Andrew Schorr:

From the Internet, Lorraine from Florida would like more specific information on skin side effects for erlotinib (Tarceva). Can you provide, that is, for hair and eyebrow? How often do they occur, and how best are they handled?

Dr. Carbone:

It's very common for you to have skin side effects from Tarceva. And fortunately, often, they get better if you continue the treatment. It just gets better on its own. There are topical treatments we can use.

Or sometimes, as I said, we reduce the dose to improve the tolerance. The standard dose of Tarceva is 150 milligrams. But if you are a person that is sensitive to it, I often reduce to 100 or 50, and the tumor is well controlled with fewer side effects. And so the drug is so effective against the tumor, it's really important to try to treat the side effects rather than stopping the drug.

But it's also important, since it's a chronic issue, having this chronic toxicity does wear on you. So try some of the topical or oral therapies your doctor should be able to recommend for the skin side effects. It will have effects on losing hair and things like that that are a little harder to treat. But it's better than progressing lung cancer, that's for sure.

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