

ABACAVIR

a-bak-a-veer

What does it do?

Abacavir is used with other medicines to control HIV.

Before you start

- Tell your doctor if you have liver problems.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.
- You will be given a test to see if you might be more likely to have an allergic reaction to *abacavir*.

How should you take it?

Take *abacavir* as directed. It is very important to take it regularly. If you often forget to take *abacavir*, it may not work as well and may increase the risk of an allergic reaction.

Take the tablets with a glass of water.

Measure the liquid carefully with an oral syringe or measuring spoon.

What if you forget a dose?

If it is nearly time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the usual time. Otherwise, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. Do not take two doses at the same time.

Can you take other medicines?

Some medicines available without a prescription may react with *abacavir* including:

- orlistat (Xenical®)

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products or recreational drugs.

What side effects might you notice?

Life-threatening allergic reactions have occurred in people taking *abacavir*. This is more likely to occur in people with a certain gene, which you will be tested for before you start. Symptoms include skin rash, and/or a combination of fever, short of breath, sore throat or cough, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, or feeling very tired or achy. Contact your doctor immediately if these occur. Read the alert card in your tablet pack.

| Side Effects | Recommended action |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Symptoms of liver problems including: yellow skin or eyes, itching, dark urine, pale bowel motions, abdominal pain | Tell your doctor immediately |
| Tiredness or weakness, headache Trouble sleeping Stomach upset | Tell your doctor if troublesome |

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Other information:

- You will need regular blood tests while taking *abacavir* to check if it is causing problems with your liver. You will also need blood tests to check your viral load.
- *Abacavir* belongs to a group of medicines that have caused a serious condition called lactic acidosis. Contact your doctor immediately if you suddenly feel very unwell or unusually tired, or if your breathing becomes faster than normal.
- As your HIV comes under control, your immune system begins to recover. It may start fighting infections better than before which may make you unwell for a while. Your doctor may call this Immune Reconstitution Syndrome.
- Treatment for HIV may change your body shape. These changes can include fat build-up, fat loss, or both. Discuss this with your doctor.
- Do not stop taking *abacavir* without talking to your doctor first. If you do stop taking it for any reason, talk with your doctor before restarting about the risk of an allergic reaction.
- *Abacavir* liquid expires 2 months after you first open the bottle. If you have any liquid left over after 2 months, take it back to your pharmacy.

This leaflet contains important, but not all, information about this medicine.

Prepared by the MyMedicines Committee at Christchurch Hospital, Te Whatu Ora - Waitaha, New Zealand. March 2023