

Abacavir sulfate

a-BAK-a-veer

Brand Name: Ziagen

Abacavir sulfate, also known as Ziagen or ABC, is a type of antiretroviral drug called a nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI). NRTIs block reverse transcriptase, a protein that HIV needs to make more copies of itself.

HIV/AIDS-Related Uses

Abacavir was approved by the FDA on December 17, 1998, for use with other antiretroviral drugs in the treatment of HIV infection in adults and children 3 months of age or older. Abacavir does not cure or prevent HIV infection or AIDS and does not reduce the risk of passing the virus to other people.

Abacavir has also been combined with the antiretroviral drugs lamivudine and zidovudine in a single tablet called Trizivir.

Dosage Information

Abacavir sulfate comes in tablet and liquid form and is taken by mouth with or without food.

Recommended Daily Dose

The recommended dose of abacavir for adults is 300 mg twice a day. For children and adolescents age 3 months to 16 years, the recommended dose is 8 mg/kg twice a day (up to a maximum of 300 mg twice a day). Patients with decreased liver function should take the liquid form of abacavir; the recommended dose for these patients is 10 ml twice a day.

Some patients may benefit from different doses of abacavir. Patients should always take abacavir as prescribed by their doctors.

Contraindications

Individuals who have experienced a hypersensitivity reaction to abacavir (in Ziagen or Trizivir) should not take this medicine.

Possible Side Effects

Along with its desired effects, abacavir can cause some serious unwanted effects. In some patients, abacavir has caused a severe allergic reaction resulting in death. This reaction usually occurs

during the first 6 weeks of taking abacavir but can occur at any time. Individuals taking abacavir should stop taking it and tell a doctor right away if they have a skin rash or any two or more of the following symptoms: sudden fever; severe tiredness or achiness; diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain; sore throat, shortness of breath, or cough; or generally ill feeling. These symptoms are listed on a warning card included with the prescription; patients should carry the warning card with them at all times. If a doctor suspects these symptoms are caused by an allergic reaction, the patient should never take abacavir or an abacavir-containing medicine again because death could occur within hours. If abacavir treatment is stopped for a period of time, it is important that a doctor be notified before the individual starts to take it again.

Some of the most common side effects of abacavir are also signs and symptoms of severe allergic reaction, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, chills, achiness, extreme tiredness, and skin rash. More than half of all patients who take abacavir have one or more of these side effects, but only about 5% of patients who take abacavir have a severe allergic reaction. Even though this is a very small percentage, individuals who think they may be having a severe allergic reaction should stop taking abacavir and see a doctor right away.

Abacavir, like other NRTIs, can cause serious, sometimes fatal, liver disease. This has occurred both in individuals who had liver disease and in those with no known history of liver disease. Individuals who have liver disease should tell a doctor before taking this medicine. A doctor should be notified if an individual taking this medication experiences problems with digestion.

Other common side effects include headache, loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, changes in body fat, high blood-sugar levels, worsening depression, and severe abdominal or side pain.

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Drug and Food Interactions

A doctor should be notified of any other medications, prescription or nonprescription (over-the-counter), or herbal medications, also being taken. Alcohol affects the concentration of abacavir in the blood. Patients should talk with their doctor about drinking alcohol while taking abacavir.

Clinical Trials

For information on clinical trials that involve Abacavir sulfate, visit the ClinicalTrials.gov web site at <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov>. In the Search box, enter: Abacavir sulfate AND HIV Infections.

Manufacturer Information

Abacavir sulfate
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For More Information

Contact your doctor or an AIDSinfo Health Information Specialist:

- Via Phone: 1-800-448-0440 Monday - Friday, 12:00 p.m. (Noon) - 5:00 p.m. ET
- Via Live Help: http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/live_help Monday - Friday, 12:00 p.m. (Noon) - 4:00 p.m. ET