

# abacavir

(generic equivalent of Ziagen®)

300 mg - pale yellow, oval tablet  
Also available in liquid form

## What is abacavir?

Abacavir is a medicine used to lower the amount of HIV virus in your body and make your immune system stronger. Abacavir is always used with other HIV medicines.

## How do I take it?

- Take as directed on the prescription label:

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- Take abacavir at the same time(s) every day, with or without food

Store tablets and liquid in a dry place at room temperature, and keep out of reach of children.

## What if I forget to take it?

It is very important to take abacavir every day to make sure that it keeps working. If you miss a dose, there is a higher chance that the virus will change to a form that is harder to treat. This is called "resistance".

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take 2 doses at the same time. If you are not sure if you should take your dose, call the pharmacist.

If you stop taking HIV medicine, the amount of HIV virus in your blood will increase.

**Do not stop any of your HIV medicines without talking to your doctor.**

## What should I expect?

Abacavir is usually well tolerated. Side effects may include:

- nausea
- headache
- tiredness

Rare, serious side effects may include:

- Allergic reaction: Signs include rash, blisters on skin or mouth, swelling of the face or throat, difficulty breathing, fever, flu-like symptoms
  - Before starting abacavir, you must do a special blood test (HLA-B\*5701 test) to check if you are at risk for severe allergy to abacavir
  - Tell your doctor if you have ever had a severe allergic reaction to abacavir
- Liver problems: Signs include yellow skin or eyes, dark urine, pale stools, or pain on right side below ribs
- A condition called lactic acidosis: Signs include unusual muscle pain, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, or a fast heartbeat or fast breathing

**Always tell your doctor or pharmacist if side effects are bothering you.**

**IMMEDIATELY contact your doctor if you have any serious side effects.**

It is important to have regular blood tests to watch for side effects and make sure your HIV medicine is working to control the virus.

Talk to your doctor if you are pregnant or are thinking about becoming pregnant, or if you plan to breastfeed.



## Can I take abacavir with other medicines?

Abacavir can be used safely with most other medicines.

Drug interactions can stop your treatment from working or may cause unwanted side effects. Always tell your pharmacist and doctor if you are using any prescription or non-prescription medicines, vitamins, supplements, natural medicines or recreational drugs.

Always check with your pharmacist before starting any new medicines to make sure that they are safe for you.

## What if I have questions?

If you have questions or problems with your medicine, call the St. Paul's Hospital Ambulatory Pharmacy:

**1-888-511-6222**

(Monday to Friday daytime and urgent issues after hours)

To book an appointment to see a St. Paul's Hospital pharmacist, call reception:

**604-806-8060**

(Monday to Friday daytime)

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