Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Abacavir and Lamivudine

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it’s used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Epzicom [DSC]

Brand Names: Canada

APO-Abacavir-Lamivudine; Auro-Abacavir/Lamivudine; JAMP-Abacavir/Lamivudine; Kivexa; MYLAN-Abacavir/Lamivudine; PMS-Abacavir-Lamivudine; TEVA-Abacavir/Lamivudine

Warning

- Unsafe and sometimes deadly allergic effects with organ failure have happened with abacavir. Tell your doctor about any fever, rash, feeling tired, upset stomach, throwing up, diarrhea, stomach pain, flu-like signs, sore throat, cough, or trouble breathing. Do not restart this drug if you have had an allergic reaction.
- The chance of allergic effects is raised in people who have a certain gene called HLA-B*5701. Do not take this drug if you have the HLA-B*5701 gene. Your doctor will check you for this gene before you start this drug. Talk with your doctor.
- Read the warning card and carry it with you at all times. It tells the signs to watch for in case an allergy happens.
- Hepatitis B has gotten worse when this drug was stopped in some people with hepatitis B. Close follow-up for a few months is needed when therapy is stopped in people who have hepatitis B. Do not stop taking this drug without calling your doctor.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat HIV infection.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have any of these health problems: Kidney disease or liver disease.
- If you have been tested and know that you have a gene type called HLA-B*5701.
- If you are taking a drug that has sorbitol in it.

- If you are pregnant, may become pregnant, or are breast-feeding. Before taking this drug, you will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby. You will also need to talk about the best way to prevent passing HIV to the baby.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- Hepatitis B testing needs to be done as you were told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- If you have HIV and hepatitis B, the hepatitis B virus can change while you take this drug. If this happens, the hepatitis B virus may be harder to treat. Talk with your doctor.
- Some studies have shown a higher risk of heart attack with abacavir. However, other studies have not shown this risk. It is not known if abacavir caused this effect.
- Use care if you have risks for heart disease (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, overweight, high blood sugar or diabetes, cigarette smoking, male older than 40 years of age, other family members with early heart disease, female after menopause). Talk with your doctor.
- If this drug is stopped because you have an allergy to it, do not restart it.

Throw away any of this drug that you have not taken. If you are not sure how to throw away unused drugs, check with your pharmacist.

- If this drug is stopped for a reason other than an allergy, do not restart it without talking to the doctor. It could be very risky to restart on your own.
- Do not run out of this drug.
- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.
- This drug is not a cure for HIV. Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well. Be sure to stay under the care of your doctor and have regular appointments.
- This drug helps to lower how much HIV is in the blood. Lowering the amount of HIV in the blood until it is not detected on blood tests can help lower the risk of spreading HIV to others. There are also other ways to help prevent the spread of HIV to others. This includes using condoms during sex and not sharing needles and other injection equipment. Talk with your doctor or other health care provider about the best way to prevent spreading HIV to others.
- Rarely, this drug may cause a swollen liver and a buildup of acid in the blood. Sometimes, this may be deadly. The risk may be higher in females, in overweight people, and in people who have taken drugs like this one for a long time.
- A pancreas problem (pancreatitis) has happened in children taking lamivudine with or without other HIV drugs. Sometimes this has been deadly. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of too much lactic acid in the blood (lactic acidosis) like fast breathing, fast heartbeat, a heartbeat that does not feel normal, very bad upset stomach or throwing up, feeling very sleepy, shortness of breath, feeling very tired or weak, very bad dizziness, feeling cold, or muscle pain or cramps.
- Signs of a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of kidney problems like unable to pass urine, change in how much urine is passed, blood in the urine, or a big weight gain.
- Severe dizziness or passing out.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- Depression.
- Mouth sores.
- Bone, joint, or muscle pain.
- Swollen gland.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Swelling.
- Changes in your immune system can happen when you start taking drugs to treat HIV. If you have an infection that you did not know you had, it may show up when you take this drug. Tell your doctor right away if you have any new signs after you start this drug, even after taking it for several months. This includes signs of infection like fever, sore throat, weakness, cough, or shortness of breath.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Feeling dizzy, tired, or weak.
- Headache.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Strange or odd dreams.
- Diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, or throwing up.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All products:

- Take with or without food.
- It is important that you do not miss or skip a dose of this drug during treatment.

Tablets:

- If you have trouble swallowing, talk with your doctor.

Tablets for suspension:

- This drug may be swallowed whole, broken in half on the score line, or mixed with water to make a suspension.
- Do not chew this drug.
- Do not take chipped or broken tablets.
- To mix this drug, place the number of tablets needed for a dose into a cup. Add 10 mL of water for each tablet used (add 5 mL if using ½ tablet). Stir or swirl the cup until the tablets are small enough to drink. If needed, a spoon can be used to crush the tablet pieces.
- Take your dose within 1 hour after mixing. If not taken right after mixing, stir or swirl the cup for about 2 to 3 minutes before taking. Rinse cup with 5 to 10 mL of water for each tablet used and drink. Throw away any part not used within 1 hour of mixing.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- If you are not sure what to do if you miss a dose, call your doctor.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

All products:

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

Tablets for suspension:

- Store in the original container with the lid tightly closed.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else’s drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider’s examination and assessment of a patient’s specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient.

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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