PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Ritonavir

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ 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

Norvir

## Brand Names: Canada

AURO-Ritonavir; Norvir

## Warning

- This drug interacts with many other drugs. The chance of this drug's side effects may be raised or how well this drug works may be lowered. The chance of side effects from other drugs may also be raised. This may include severe, life-threatening, or deadly side effects. Many drugs must not be taken with this drug. Check with your doctor and pharmacist to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your other drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins).

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat HIV infection.
- This drug is taken with other drugs. Be sure you know about the warnings, benefits, and risks of these other drugs. Talk with the doctor if you have questions or concerns about any of the drugs.

## What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug? All products:

- 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 liver disease.
- If you are pregnant, may become pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You may need to avoid taking some forms of this drug if you are pregnant. 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.

**Liquid (solution):**

- If you have a feeding tube. This drug is not for use with some types of feeding tubes.
- If you are taking disulfiram.
- If you are taking metronidazole.

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?

### All products:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- High blood sugar has happened with this drug. This includes diabetes that is new or worse.
- Check your blood sugar as you have been told by your doctor.
- This drug may cause high cholesterol and triglyceride levels. Talk with the doctor.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- 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.

- Some people with hemophilia have had times of more bleeding when taking drugs like this one. If you have hemophilia, talk with your doctor.
- Liver problems and a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) have happened with this drug. Sometimes, this has been deadly. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- If giving this drug to your child and your child's weight changes, talk with the doctor. The dose of this drug may need to be changed.
- Birth control pills and other hormone-based birth control may not work as well to prevent pregnancy. Use some other kind of birth control also like a condom when taking this drug.

### Liquid (solution):

- This drug has alcohol and propylene glycol in it. These may cause very bad and sometimes deadly side effects in newborns or young children. Do not use this drug in premature newborns for some time after birth or in newborns younger than 14 days old unless the doctor tells you to.
- If the patient is a child younger than 6 months, use this

drug with care. The risk of some side effects may be higher in these children.

## 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 high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- 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 a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Severe or long-lasting diarrhea. This may lead to fluid

and electrolyte problems.

- Fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Flushing.
- Sweating a lot.
- Swelling.
- Blurred eyesight.
- Change in body fat.
- Back pain, belly pain, groin pain, or blood in the urine. May be signs of a kidney stone.
- 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.
- A severe skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause severe health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if you have signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin

(with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in your mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.

## 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:

- Diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Stomach pain or heartburn.
- Gas.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Change in taste.
- Numbness or tingling in the hands, feet, or around the mouth.
- Back, muscle, or joint pain.

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 meals.
- It is important that you do not miss or skip a dose of this drug during treatment.

### Tablets:

- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.

### Liquid (solution):

- Shake well before use.
- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.
- You may take liquid alone or mix with a full glass (8 ounces/240 mL) of chocolate milk, Ensure®, or Advera® to make it taste better. Take this drug within 1 hour of mixing.

### Powder packet:

- Be sure you know how many packets to use.
- Mix the powder with soft food like applesauce or vanilla pudding. You may also mix with liquid like water, chocolate milk, or infant formula. Take this drug within 2 hours of mixing. Throw away any part not taken after mixing.
- Take with food to help lower the bitter taste.
- Those who have feeding tubes may use this drug. Use as you have been told. Flush the feeding tube after this drug is given.

## 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?

### Liquid (solution):

- Store solution in the original container at room temperature. Keep the cap tightly closed. Throw away

when the date on the bottle has been reached.

### Tablets:

- Store in the original container at room temperature. Keep the cap tightly closed. If stored outside of the original container, throw away any part not used after 2 weeks. This drug may be exposed to temperatures between 86°F and 122°F (30°C and 50°C) for 7 days.

### Powder packet:

- Store at room temperature.

### All products:

- Protect from heat.
- Store 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.

## 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.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, 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. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

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

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