Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Valganciclovir

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

Valcyte

Brand Names: Canada

AURO-Valganciclovir; Auro-Valganciclovir; MINT-Valganciclovir; TEVA-ValGANciclovir; Valcyte

Warning

- Blood and bone marrow problems like anemia, low platelet counts, and low white blood cell counts have happened with this drug. Sometimes, these may be severe or life-threatening. A change in dose or even stopping the drug may be needed as the doctor tells you.
- This drug may cause fertility problems in animals and some humans. Fertility problems may lead to not being able to get pregnant or to father a child. This may go back to normal, but sometimes it may not. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- In animals, this drug has caused harm to unborn babies and cancer. This drug may have the same effects in humans. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection of the eyes in people with immune system problems.
- It is used to prevent cytomegalovirus (CMV) disease after organ transplant.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

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: Low white blood cell count, low platelet count, or low red blood cell count.
- If you have kidney disease or are on dialysis.
- If you are taking imipenem-cilastatin.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug.

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?

For all uses of this drug:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert

until you see how this drug affects you.

- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- You may have more chance of getting an infection. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.
- You may bleed more easily. Be careful and avoid injury. Use a soft toothbrush and an electric razor.
- Do not run out of this drug.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- If the patient is a child, use this drug with care. The risk of some side effects may be higher in children.
- This drug may cause harm to an unborn baby or loss of an unborn baby. A pregnancy test will be done before you start this drug to show that you are NOT pregnant.
- If you may become pregnant, use birth control while taking this drug and for at least 30 days after the last dose. If you get pregnant, call your doctor right away.
- If your sex partner may become pregnant, use a condom while taking this drug and for at least 90 days after your last dose. If your partner gets pregnant, call the doctor right away.

For CMV infections of the eye:

- This drug is not a cure for CMV infections of the eye. Stay under the care of your doctor.
- Have an eye exam as you have been told by your 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 infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Signs of bleeding like throwing up or coughing up blood; vomit that looks like coffee grounds; blood in the urine; black, red, or tarry stools; bleeding from the gums; abnormal vaginal bleeding; bruises without a cause or that get bigger; or bleeding you cannot stop.
- 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.
- Signs of a urinary tract infection (UTI) like blood in the urine, burning or pain when passing urine, feeling the need to pass urine often or right away, fever, lower stomach pain, or pelvic pain.
- Signs of electrolyte problems like mood changes; confusion; muscle pain, cramps, or spasms; weakness; shakiness; change in balance; an abnormal heartbeat; seizures; loss of appetite; or severe upset stomach or throwing up.
- Dark urine or yellow skin or eyes.
- Shakiness.
- Anxiety.
- Depression.

- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Severe dizziness or passing out.
- Swelling in the arms or legs.
- Swelling of belly.
- Change in eyesight, eye pain, or severe eye irritation.
- Shortness of breath.
- Night sweats.

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:

- Constipation, diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Headache.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Feeling dizzy, tired, or weak.
- Weight loss.
- Back, muscle, or joint pain.
- Muscle spasm.
- Signs of a common cold.

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 this drug with food.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.
- You will need to be sure that you are not dehydrated while taking this drug. Check with your doctor to see if you need to drink extra fluids while taking this drug.
- You will need to take special care when handling this drug. Check with the doctor or pharmacist to see how to handle this drug.
- Do not get this drug, as well as the liquid, broken tablets, or crushed tablets, on your skin or in your eyes, nose, or mouth. If you get it on your skin, wash with soap and water. If you get it in your eyes, rinse with plain water.

Tablets:

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

Liquid:

- Your pharmacist will need to mix this drug before you get it.
- Shake well for 5 seconds before each 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.
- Do not mix with any liquid.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it, with food.
- 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.

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

Tablets:

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.

Liquid:

- Store liquid (solution) in a refrigerator. Throw away any part not used 7 weeks after it was mixed.
- Do not freeze.

All products:

- 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.

Last Reviewed Date

2026-01-28

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

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.

Valganciclovir - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center