PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Abacavir, Lamivudine, and Zidovudine

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

Trizivir [DSC]

Warning

- Unsafe and sometimes deadly allergic effects with organ failure have happened with abacavir. Tell your child's 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 your child has had an allergic effect.
- The chance of allergic effects is raised in people who have a certain gene called HLA-B*5701. Do not give this drug to your child if your child has the HLA-

B*5701 gene. The doctor will check your child for this gene before starting this drug. Talk with the 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.
- 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.
- Hepatitis B has gotten worse when this drug was stopped in some people with hepatitis B. Close follow-up for several months is needed when therapy is stopped in people who have hepatitis B. Do not stop giving this drug to your child without calling your child's doctor.
- Low white and red blood cell counts have happened with this drug. If white blood cell counts get low, the chance of getting an infection may be raised. If red blood cell counts get low, this can lead to anemia and a blood transfusion. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause muscle aches and stiffness if it is used for long periods of time. Closely read the part in

this leaflet that lists when to call the doctor.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat HIV infection.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child has any of these health problems: Kidney disease or liver disease.
- If your child has been tested and you know that your child has a gene type called HLA-B*5701.
- If your child weighs less than 88 pounds (40 kilograms).
- If your child is taking any of these drugs: Doxorubicin, ribavirin, or stavudine.
- If your child is taking a drug that has sorbitol in it.
- If your child is pregnant, may become pregnant, or is breast-feeding a baby. Before giving this drug to your child, you will need to talk about the benefits and risks to your child and the baby. You will also need to talk about the best way for your child to prevent passing HIV to the baby.

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

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

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- 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 your child has risks for heart disease (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, overweight, high blood sugar or diabetes, smoking or other nicotine use, other family members with early heart disease). Talk with the doctor.
- Have your child's blood work and other lab tests

checked as you have been told by the doctor.

- If this drug is stopped because your child has an allergy to it, do not restart it. Throw away any of this drug that your child has 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.
- Alcohol may interact with this drug. Be sure your child does not drink alcohol.
- This drug is not a cure for HIV. Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by the doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well. Be sure your child stays under the care of the doctor and has 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 child's doctor or other health care provider about the best way to

prevent spreading HIV to others.

- Loss of body fat in the legs, arms, buttocks, and face can happen with this drug. This may not go back to normal. It is not known how this loss of body fat may affect health over a long time. Your child will need to be checked for any changes in body fat while taking this drug. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- 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.
- If your child has hepatitis C and HIV, talk with your child's doctor. Liver function has gotten worse in people who were taking this drug and interferon alfa with or without ribavirin. Sometimes, this has been deadly.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child's 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 child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has 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.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- Depression.
- Severe dizziness or passing out.
- Mouth sores.

- Muscle pain or weakness.
- Joint pain.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Shortness of breath.
- Swelling.
- Change in body fat.
- Changes in your child's immune system can happen when your child starts taking drugs to treat HIV. If your child has an infection that you did not know was there, it may show up when your child takes this drug. Tell your child's doctor right away if your child has any new signs after starting 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 child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Headache.

- Diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Anxiety.
- Feeling tired or weak.

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

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- Give this drug with or without food.
- It is important that your child does not miss or skip a dose of this drug during treatment.
- If your child has trouble swallowing, talk with the doctor.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

- If you are not sure what to do if your child misses a dose, call the doctor.

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

- 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.

General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's 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

2024-07-17

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.

Abacavir, Lamivudine, and Zidovudine - Last updated on December 12, 2022
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center



Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center