PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Acyclovir (Topical

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

Sitavig [DSC]; Zovirax

Brand Names: Canada

APO-Acyclovir; TARO-Acyclovir; Zovirax

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat cold sores.
- It is used to treat genital warts.
- It is used to treat shingles or certain other herpes infections.

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

All products:

- 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.

Buccal tablets:

- If your child is allergic to milk, talk with the doctor.

This drug may interact with other drugs or health problems.

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?

All products:

- 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.

If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:

- Talk with the doctor if your child is pregnant, becomes pregnant, or is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to your child and the baby.

Ointment:

- This drug is not a cure for herpes infections. Talk with the doctor.

If your child is or may be sexually active:

- If your child has genital herpes, this drug will not stop it from spreading. Be sure your child does not have any kind of sex when any sores or other signs of genital herpes are present. Genital herpes can also be spread if your child does not have any signs. Be sure your child does not have any kind of sex without using a latex or polyurethane condom. Talk with the doctor.

All other products:

- This drug will not cure cold sores. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.

Cream, ointment:

- Talk with your child's doctor before you use other drugs or products on your child's skin. This includes soaps.

Buccal tablets:

- Do not give this drug to younger children. The chance of choking may be raised.

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.

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:

Cream, ointment:

- Skin irritation.
- Burning or stinging.
- Itching.

Cream:

- Dry or cracked lips.
- Flakiness of the skin.
- Dry skin.
- Peeling.

Buccal tablets:

- Headache.
- Pain where it was placed.

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.

Cream, ointment:

- Keep using this drug as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child's signs get better.
- Do not give by mouth. Use on your child's skin only. Keep out of your child's mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Clean affected part before use. Make sure to dry well.
- Put a thin layer on the affected skin.

Cream:

- Use at the first sign of a cold sore.
- Avoid putting on healthy skin.
- Be sure your child does not rub the cold sore. Rubbing the cold sore may make it worse. It may also cause the cold sore to spread to other areas around the mouth.

Ointment:

- Use a rubber glove to put on the ointment. This helps to prevent the spread of infection.

Buccal tablets:

- Use within 1 hour after the first signs of a cold sore. Put on the same side of the mouth as the cold sore.
- Dry your hands and place the tablet in your child's mouth above the incisor tooth between the upper cheek and gum. Have your child leave the tablet in place until it dissolves.
- Be sure your child does not swallow this drug whole. Do not let your child chew, break, or crush.
- Do not let your child suck on this product.
- Do not take this drug out of the blister pack until you are ready to give this drug to your child. Give this drug right away after opening the blister pack. Do not store the removed drug for future use.
- Your child may eat and drink when using this drug. Be sure your child avoids doing things that may knock the tablet loose, like chewing gum, touching the tablet, wearing upper dentures, and brushing teeth.
- If your child's mouth gets dry when using this drug, have your child drink more liquids.
- If the drug does not stick or falls out within the first 6 hours, put the same tablet back in. If you cannot do this, put in a new tablet.

- If the drug is swallowed within the first 6 hours, have your child drink a glass of water and put in a new tablet.
- If the drug falls out or is swallowed after the first 6 hours, you do not need to re-apply a tablet.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- Put on 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 put on 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

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

All products:

- Store at room temperature. Do not freeze.
- Protect from heat.
- 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.

Buccal tablets:

- Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.

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.

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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

2025-05-15

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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.

Acyclovir (Topical - Last updated on December 12, 2022

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