

Abacavir

a-BAK-a-veer

Brand Name: Ziagen

Drug Class: Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors

Abacavir sulfate, also known as Ziagen or ABC, is a type of medicine called a nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI). NRTIs block reverse transcriptase, a protein that HIV needs to make more copies of itself.

HIV/AIDS-Related Uses

Abacavir sulfate was approved by the FDA on December 17, 1998, for use with other antiretroviral drugs in the treatment of HIV infection in adults and children 3 months of age or older. Abacavir sulfate does not cure or prevent HIV infection or AIDS and does not reduce the risk of passing the virus to other people.

Abacavir sulfate has also been combined with other antiretroviral drugs in single tablet form. Abacavir and lamivudine are available in a single tablet called Epzicom. Abacavir, lamivudine, and zidovudine are available in a single tablet called Trizivir.

Dosage Form/Administration

Abacavir sulfate comes in tablet and liquid form and is taken by mouth.

Recommended Daily Dose

The recommended dosage of abacavir sulfate for adults is 300 mg twice a day. For children and adolescents age 3 months to 16 years, the recommended dosage is 8 mg/kg twice a day (up to a maximum of 300 mg twice a day). Individuals with decreased liver function should take the liquid form of abacavir sulfate; the recommended dosage for these patients is 10 ml twice a day.

Some individuals may benefit from different doses of abacavir sulfate. Individuals should always take abacavir sulfate as prescribed by their doctors.

Contraindications

Individuals who have experienced a serious allergic reaction (hypersensitivity reaction) to abacavir sulfate (in Ziagen, Epzicom, or Trizivir) should not take this medicine. Individuals who test positive for HLA B*5701, a genetic marker for the hypersensitivity reaction to abacavir sulfate, should not take abacavir in any form.

Possible Side Effects

Along with its desired effects, abacavir sulfate can cause some serious unwanted effects. In some individuals, abacavir sulfate has caused a severe allergic reaction resulting in death. This reaction usually occurs during the first 6 weeks of taking abacavir sulfate but can occur at any time. Individuals taking abacavir sulfate should stop taking it and tell a doctor right away if they have a skin rash or any two or more of the following symptoms: sudden fever; severe tiredness or achiness; diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain; sore throat, shortness of breath, or cough; or a general ill feeling. These symptoms are listed on a warning card included with the prescription; individuals should carry the warning card with them at all times. If a doctor suspects these symptoms are caused by an allergic reaction, the individual should never take abacavir sulfate or an abacavir-containing medicine again, because death could occur within hours. If abacavir sulfate treatment is stopped for a period of time, it is important that a doctor be notified before the individual starts to take it again.

Some of the most common side effects of abacavir sulfate are also signs and symptoms of severe allergic reaction, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, chills, achiness, extreme tiredness, and skin rash. More than half of all individuals who take abacavir sulfate have one or more of these side effects, but only about 8% of individuals who take abacavir sulfate have a severe allergic reaction. Even though this is a very small percentage, individuals who think they may be having a severe allergic reaction should stop taking abacavir sulfate and see a doctor right away.

Abacavir sulfate, like other NRTIs, can cause serious, sometimes fatal, liver disease. This has occurred both in individuals who had liver disease and in those with no known history of liver disease. Individuals who have liver disease should tell a doctor before taking this medicine. Problems with digestion have also been reported. Individuals

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Possible Side Effects (cont.)

should tell a doctor if they have any of these side effects.

Other common side effects include headache, loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, changes in body fat, high blood-sugar levels, worsening depression, and severe abdominal or side pain. Individuals should tell a doctor if these side effects continue or are bothersome.

Drug and Food Interactions

A doctor should be notified of any other medications, prescription or nonprescription (over-the-counter), or herbal medications, also being taken.

Clinical Trials

For information on clinical trials that involve Abacavir, visit the [ClinicalTrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) web site at <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov>. In the Search box, enter: Abacavir AND HIV Infections.

Manufacturer Information

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(888) 825-5249

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For More Information

Contact your doctor or an AIDSinfo Health Information Specialist:

- Via Phone: 1-800-448-0440 Monday - Friday, 12:00 p.m. (Noon) - 5:00 p.m. ET
- Via Live Help: http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/live_help Monday - Friday, 12:00 p.m. (Noon) - 4:00 p.m. ET