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URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a687007.html>

Zidovudine

pronounced as (zye doe' vue deen)

IMPORTANT WARNING:

Zidovudine may decrease the number of certain cells in your blood, including red and white blood cells. Tell your doctor if you have or have ever had a low number of any type of blood cells or any blood disorders such as anemia (a lower than normal number of red blood cells) or bone marrow problems. Call your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms: unusual bleeding or bruising, fever, chills, or other symptoms of infection, unusual tiredness or weakness, or pale skin.

Zidovudine also may cause life-threatening damage to the liver and a potentially life-threatening condition called lactic acidosis (buildup of lactic acid in the blood). Tell your doctor if you have or have ever had liver disease. If you experience any of the following symptoms, call your doctor immediately or get emergency medical treatment: nausea, vomiting, pain in the upper right part of your stomach, loss of appetite, extreme tiredness, weakness, dizziness, lightheadedness, fast or irregular heartbeat, trouble breathing, dark yellow or brown urine, light-colored bowel movements, yellowing of the skin or eyes, feeling cold, especially in the arms or legs, or muscle pain that is different than any muscle pain you usually experience.

Zidovudine may cause muscle disease, especially when taken for a longer period of time. Call your doctor if you have tiredness, muscle pain, or weakness.

It is important to keep all appointments with your doctor and the laboratory. Your doctor will order certain lab tests to check your response to zidovudine.

Talk to your doctor about the risks of taking zidovudine.

Why is this medication prescribed?

Zidovudine is used along with other medications to treat human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Zidovudine is given to HIV-positive pregnant women to reduce the chance of passing the infection to the baby. Zidovudine is in a class of medications called nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs). It works by decreasing the amount of HIV in the blood. Although zidovudine does not cure HIV, it may

decrease your chance of developing acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and HIV-related illnesses such as serious infections or cancer. Taking these medications along with practicing safer sex and making other life-style changes may decrease the risk of transmitting (spreading) the HIV virus to other people.

How should this medicine be used?

Zidovudine comes as a capsule, tablet, and syrup to take by mouth. It is usually taken twice a day by adults and two to three times a day by infants and children. Infants 6 weeks of age and younger may take zidovudine every 6 hours. When zidovudine is taken by pregnant women, it may be taken 5 times a day. Follow the directions on your prescription label carefully, and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Take zidovudine exactly as directed. Do not take more or less of it or take it more often than prescribed by your doctor.

Your doctor may temporarily stop your treatment if you experience serious side effects.

Zidovudine controls HIV infection but does not cure it. Continue to take zidovudine even if you feel well. Do not stop taking zidovudine without talking to your doctor. When your supply of zidovudine starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacist. If you miss doses or stop taking zidovudine, your condition may become more difficult to treat.

Other uses for this medicine

Zidovudine is also used along with other medications in certain situations to treat healthcare workers and other individuals exposed to HIV infection after accidental contact with HIV-contaminated blood, tissues, or other body fluids. Talk to your doctor about the possible risks of using this drug for your condition.

This medication is sometimes prescribed for other uses; ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

What special precautions should I follow?

Before taking zidovudine,

- tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to zidovudine, any other medications, or any of the other ingredients in zidovudine products. Ask your pharmacist for a list of the ingredients.
- tell your doctor and pharmacist what other prescription and nonprescription medications, vitamins, nutritional supplements, you are taking or plan to take. Be sure to mention any of the following: chemotherapy medications for cancer, doxorubicin (Doxil), ganciclovir (Cytovene, Valcyte), interferon alfa, ribavirin (Copegus, Rebetol, Ribasphere), and stavudine (Zerit). Your doctor may need to change the doses of your medications or monitor you carefully for side effects.
- tell your doctor if you have or have ever had kidney disease.
- tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breastfeeding. If you become pregnant while taking zidovudine, call your doctor. You should not breastfeed if you are infected with HIV or if you are taking zidovudine.
- you should know that you may have a loss of body fat from your face, legs, and arms. Talk to your doctor if you notice this change.

- you should know that while you are taking medications to treat HIV infection, your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight other infections that were already in your body. This may cause you to develop symptoms of those infections. If you have new or worsening symptoms after starting treatment with zidovudine, be sure to tell your doctor.

What special dietary instructions should I follow?

Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, continue your normal diet.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

Skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

What side effects can this medication cause?

Zidovudine may cause side effects. Tell your doctor if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away:

- stomach pain or cramps
- heartburn
- diarrhea (especially in children)
- constipation
- headache
- difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep

If you experience the following symptom, or any of those listed in the IMPORTANT WARNING section, call your doctor immediately:

- rash
- blistering or peeling of the skin
- hives
- itching
- difficulty breathing or swallowing
- swelling of the eyes, face, tongue, lips, or throat

If you experience a serious side effect, you or your doctor may send a report to the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program online (<http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch> [<http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch>]) or by phone (1-800-332-1088).

What should I know about storage and disposal of this medication?

Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children. Store it at room temperature and away from excess heat and moisture (not in the bathroom).

It is important to keep all medication out of sight and reach of children as many containers (such as weekly pill minders and those for eye drops, creams, patches, and inhalers) are not child-resistant and young children can open them easily. To protect young children from poisoning, always lock safety caps and immediately place the medication in a safe location – one that is up and away and out of their sight and reach. <http://www.upandaway.org> [<http://www.upandaway.org>]

Unneeded medications should be disposed of in special ways to ensure that pets, children, and other people cannot consume them. However, you should not flush this medication down the toilet. Instead, the best way to dispose of your medication is through a medicine take-back program. Talk to your pharmacist or contact your local garbage/recycling department to learn about take-back programs in your community. See the FDA's Safe Disposal of Medicines website (<http://goo.gl/c4Rm4p> [<http://goo.gl/c4Rm4p>]) for more information if you do not have access to a take-back program.

In case of emergency/overdose

In case of overdose, call the poison control helpline at 1-800-222-1222. Information is also available online at <https://www.poisonhelp.org/help> [<https://www.poisonhelp.org/help>]. If the victim has collapsed, had a seizure, has trouble breathing, or can't be awakened, immediately call emergency services at 911.

What other information should I know?

Do not let anyone else take your medication. Ask your pharmacist any questions you have about refilling your prescription.

Keep a supply of zidovudine on hand. Do not wait until you run out of medication to refill your prescription.

It is important for you to keep a written list of all of the prescription and nonprescription (over-the-counter) medicines you are taking, as well as any products such as vitamins, minerals, or other dietary supplements. You should bring this list with you each time you visit a doctor or if you are admitted to a hospital. It is also important information to carry with you in case of emergencies.

Brand names

- Retrovir[®]

Other names

- AZT
- ZDV

Last Revised - 05/15/2018

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National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

National Institutes of Health

Page last updated: 25 March 2022