

TITLE - ABACAVIR / ZIAGEN MEDICATION PATIENT INFORMATION IN ENGLISH

Source : U.S. National Institutes of Health

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Drug information

Pronounce: [Abacavir](#)

Brand Name: Ziagen

Other Names: ABC, abacavir sulfate

Drug Class: Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitor (NRTIs)

Drug Image(s): (Click to enlarge)



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What are the most important things to know about abacavir?

Abacavir can cause serious, life-threatening side effects. These include allergic reactions, a buildup of [lactic acid](#) in the blood ([lactic acidosis](#)), and [liver](#) problems.

People who take abacavir may have a serious allergic reaction ([hypersensitivity reaction](#)) that can cause death. Your risk of this allergic reaction is much higher if you have a [gene](#) variation called HLA-B*5701. Your health care provider can determine if you have this gene variation with a blood test.

If you get a symptom from two or more of the following groups while taking abacavir, contact your health care provider right away to find out if you should stop taking abacavir.

Group 1 Symptoms: Fever

Group 2 Symptoms: Rash

Group 3 Symptoms: Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal (stomach area) pain

Group 4 Symptoms: General ill feeling, extreme tiredness, or achiness

Group 5 Symptoms: Shortness of breath, cough, sore throat

Your pharmacist will give you a Warning Card with a list of these symptoms. **Carry this Warning Card with you at all times.**

If you stop taking abacavir because of an allergic reaction, never take abacavir or any other abacavir-containing medicine again. (These combination HIV medicines also contain abacavir: abacavir/lamivudine [brand name: [Epzicom](#)], abacavir/lamivudine/zidovudine [brand name: [Trizivir](#)], and abacavir/dolutegravir/lamivudine [brand name: [Triumeq](#)].)

If you take abacavir or any other abacavir-containing medicine again after you have had an allergic reaction to abacavir, within hours you may get **life-threatening symptoms** that may include **very low blood pressure or death**.

If you stop taking abacavir for any other reason, even for a few days, and you are not allergic to abacavir, talk with your health care provider before taking it again. Taking abacavir again can cause a serious allergic or life-threatening reaction, even if you never had an allergic reaction to it before. **If your health care provider tells you that you can take abacavir again, start taking it when you are around medical help or people who can call a health care provider if you need one.**

Contact your health care provider right away if you have any of the following symptoms that could be signs of lactic acidosis:

- Weakness or tiredness
- Unusual muscle pain
- Shortness of breath or fast breathing
- Stomach pain with nausea and vomiting
- Cold or blue hands and feet
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Fast or abnormal heartbeat

Contact your health care provider right away if you have any of the following symptoms that could be signs of liver problems:

- Yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes ([jaundice](#))
- Dark-colored urine
- Light-colored bowel movements
- Loss of appetite for several days or longer

Nausea or vomiting

Pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach/abdominal area

Itching

While taking abacavir, it is important to keep all of your appointments with your health care provider.

What is abacavir?

Abacavir (brand name: Ziagen) is a prescription medicine approved by the U.S. [Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) for the treatment of HIV [infection](#) in adults, children, and infants. Abacavir is always used in combination with other HIV medicines.

For more information on the use of abacavir in people with HIV, please refer to the [Guidelines for the Use of Antiretroviral Agents in Adults and Adolescents Living with HIV](#) and the [Guidelines for the Use of Antiretroviral Agents in Pediatric HIV Infection](#).

HIV medicines cannot cure HIV/AIDS, but taking HIV medicines every day helps people with HIV live longer, healthier lives. HIV medicines also reduce the risk of HIV [transmission](#). If you are taking HIV medicines, do not cut down on, skip, or stop taking them unless your health care provider tells you to.

What should I tell my health care provider before taking abacavir?

Before taking abacavir, tell your health care provider:

If you are allergic to abacavir or any other medicines.

If you have been tested and know whether or not you have a particular gene variation called HLA-B*5701.

If you have or have had liver problems, including [hepatitis B virus infection](#) (HBV) or [hepatitis C virus infection](#) (HCV).

If you have heart problems, smoke, or have diseases that increase your risk of heart disease, such as [high blood pressure](#), high [cholesterol](#), or [diabetes](#).

If you drink alcohol or take medicines that contain alcohol.

If you have any other medical conditions.

If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. Talk to your health care provider about the risks and benefits of taking abacavir during pregnancy. For more information on the use of abacavir during pregnancy, please refer to the [Recommendations for the Use of Antiretroviral Drugs During Pregnancy and Interventions to Reduce Perinatal HIV Transmission in the United States](#).

If you are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. For women with HIV in the United States, the [Guideline](#) does not recommend breastfeeding. Before your baby is born, or if you are already breastfeeding, talk to your health care provider to discuss alternative options for feeding your baby.

If you are using [hormone](#)-based birth control (such as pills, implants, or vaginal rings). For more information about using birth control and HIV medicines at the same time, view the HIVinfo [HIV and Birth Control](#) infographic.

About other prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, nutritional supplements, and herbal products you are taking or plan to take. Abacavir may affect the way other medicines or products work, and other medicines or products may affect how abacavir works. **Taking abacavir together with certain medicines or products may cause serious side effects.**

How should I take abacavir?

Abacavir comes in the following forms and strengths:

300-mg tablets

20-mg/mL oral solution (a strawberry banana-flavored liquid available for infants, children, and adults who cannot swallow tablets)

Take abacavir according to your health care provider's instructions. Do not miss a [dose](#) of abacavir, and do not change your dose or stop taking abacavir without first talking with your health care provider.

Take abacavir by mouth with or without food.

If your child is prescribed abacavir, your child's health care provider will decide the right dose of abacavir based on your child's weight. The health care provider will also decide whether your child should take the tablet or liquid form of abacavir.

Always take abacavir in combination with other HIV medicines.

If you have taken too much abacavir, contact your health care provider or local poison control center (1-800-222-1222) right away, or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

For more information on how to take abacavir, see the [FDA drug label](#).

What should I do if I forget a dose?

If you miss a dose of abacavir, take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. But if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and just take your next dose at the regular time. Do not take two doses at the same time to make up for a missed dose.

What side effects can abacavir cause?

Abacavir may cause side effects. Some side effects of abacavir can be serious as noted above. Many side effects from HIV medicines, such as nausea or occasional dizziness, are manageable. See the HIVinfo fact sheet on [HIV Medicines and Side Effects](#) for more information.

Other possible side effects of abacavir include:

Changes in your [immune system](#) (called [immune reconstitution inflammatory syndrome](#) or IRIS). IRIS is a condition that sometimes occurs when the immune system begins to recover after treatment with an HIV medicine. As the immune system gets stronger, it may have an increased response to a previously hidden infection.

Increased risk of heart attack ([myocardial infarction](#)).

Tell your health care provider if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

These are not all the possible side effects of abacavir. To learn more about possible side effects of abacavir, read the [drug label](#) or [package insert](#) or talk to your health care provider or pharmacist.

You can report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088 (1-800-332-1088) or [online](#).

How should abacavir be stored?

Store abacavir tablets at room temperature, 68°F to 77°F (20°C to 25°C).

Abacavir oral solution may be refrigerated or stored at room temperature. Do not freeze abacavir oral solution.

Keep abacavir in the container that it came in and keep the container tightly closed.

Do not use abacavir if the original seal over the container opening is broken or missing.

Throw away abacavir that is no longer needed or expired (out of date). Follow [FDA guidelines](#) on how to safely dispose of unused medicines.

Keep abacavir and all medicines out of reach of children.

Where can I find more information about abacavir?

For more information on the use of abacavir in people with HIV, please refer to the [Guidelines for the Use of Antiretroviral Agents in Adults and Adolescents Living with HIV](#) and the [Guidelines for the Use of Antiretroviral Agents in Pediatric HIV Infection](#).

This Patient Version drug summary is based on the following FDA label(s): [Solution, tablet \(film coated\)](#). The Patient Counseling Information section of the label includes information for people taking abacavir.

Abacavir-related [research studies](#), from [ClinicalTrials.gov](#)

A list of [FDA-approved HIV medicines](#), from HIVinfo.

Manufacturer Information

ViiV Healthcare

Main number: 877-844-8872

Patient assistance (ViiV Connect): 844-588-3288

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