

LAMIVUDINE/ZIDOVUDINE (COMBIVIR)

USE:

Combivir is a combination antiretroviral medication that has both lamivudine and zidovudine in it. These two drugs are both part of a class of drugs called nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs). Combivir is used in combination with other antiretroviral drugs to treat HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infections. This drug is not a cure for HIV.



AVAILABLE AS: A single tablet containing 150mg lamivudine and 300mg zidovudine

HOW TO USE THIS MEDICATION:

Take this medication exactly as directed by your doctor. Do not stop taking your medication on your own without first consulting a doctor. The normal adult dose is one tablet of Combivir twice daily as close to 12 hours apart as possible. Combivir is not recommended for children under the age of twelve. Your doctor will probably want you to have occasional blood tests. Make sure that you don't miss any appointments.

It is important to take every dose of your medication. If you miss a dose of your medication, take it as soon as you remember unless it is close to your next dose. Do not take two doses at once. If you think you may have taken too much of your medication, contact your local poison control center or emergency room right away.

Combivir should be stored at room temperature in a cool, dry place away from excessive heat, cold, light or moisture. Always keep medication out of the reach of children.

CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Do not use Combivir if you are allergic to lamivudine or zidovudine (as Retrovir, Epivir, Combivir, or Trizivir) or any of the components of these medications. Do not take Combivir with Retrovir (zidovudine) or Epivir (lamivudine) because they contain the same drugs that are in Combivir. Also, do not take this medication with stavudine (Zerit).

SIDE EFFECTS:

Side effects that will most likely go away with time include mild nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or decreased appetite; headache; dizziness; runny or stuffy nose; cough; or trouble sleeping. Some people will experience a redistribution of body fat. Let your doctor know if you notice loss of fat from the arms, legs, and face or increased fat around the neck, breast and trunk. Talk to your doctor about ways to manage these side effects with diet, exercise or medication.

Warning: Contact your doctor immediately if you experience any of the conditions listed below. Stop taking the medication and seek emergency help if you have an allergic reaction to Combivir. This would include difficulty breathing, closing of the

throat, hives, or swelling of the lips, tongue or face. Serious blood problems including anemia or neutropenia may happen while taking zidovudine. Signs that this may be occurring are unusual tiredness, pale skin, sore throat, fever or chills. Muscle disorders called myopathy may be experienced with zidovudine. Symptoms of this condition are muscle weakness, pain or soreness. A condition called pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas) has been associated with this class of drugs. Notify your doctor right away if you develop symptoms of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain or fever. Lactic acidosis and severe liver problems are also serious side effects of these drugs. Call your doctor immediately if you experience nausea, vomiting, or unusual or unexpected stomach discomfort; dark urine; weakness or tiredness; shortness of breath; weak arms or legs; yellowing of the skin or eyes; or pain in the upper stomach area. Make sure your doctor knows if you have kidney disease, liver disease, bone marrow disease, a weak immune system, hepatitis B, anemia, or low white blood cell counts. Keep all appointments for blood tests so your doctor can monitor for some of these side effects.

Notify your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or breastfeeding. Lamivudine and zidovudine's effects on an unborn baby are still unclear. People with HIV should never breastfeed because of the risk of transmitting HIV to the infant.

This medication does not prevent the transmission of HIV to other people. Make sure you understand and practice safe sex and do not share needles with anyone.

DRUG INTERACTIONS:

Some medications may change the way lamivudine and zidovudine act in your body. Certain medications may need to be avoided or used with caution. Tell your doctor if you are taking any of the following medications: ganciclovir (Cytovene), interferon-alfa, doxorubicin (Adriamycin), ribavirin (Virazole), other medications for HIV (Trizivir, lamivudine (Epivir), zalcitabine (Hivid), zidovudine (Retrovir), stavudine (Zerit), or an antibiotic (Bactrim, Septra, etc). Also tell your doctor if you are taking medications that may affect your immune system such as steroids, chemotherapy, or radiation.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist about any medications including over the counter, herbal, vitamin or prescription products before using them with Combivir.

References: see references 9-11