

RITONAVIR (NORVIR, RTV)

USE:

Ritonavir is an antiretroviral drug in the class called protease inhibitors. This drug is used in combination with other antiretroviral drugs in the treatment of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infections. This drug is not a cure for HIV. Ritonavir may be used for other reasons determined by your doctor.

AVAILABLE AS: 100 milligram (mg) soft gelatin capsules; liquid available as 80mg/ml.



HOW TO USE THIS MEDICATION:

Take this medication exactly as directed by your doctor. Do not stop taking this medication on your own without first consulting a physician. The normal adult dose of Ritonavir is six 100mg capsules (600mg) twice daily. Your dose will probably start lower and gradually increase to minimize side effects. The dose for children is based on height and weight and will be determined by your doctor. This dose may be changed if you are taking other medication that may interact with ritonavir. Ritonavir should be taken with food and plenty of water. The liquid ritonavir can be mixed with chocolate milk or a nutritional drink supplement to improve the taste. Your doctor may want you to have occasional blood tests. Make sure you keep all of your appointments.

Ritonavir capsules should be stored in the refrigerator. However, they can be stored at room temperature for up to 30 days. If they are left at room temperature for longer than 30 days then throw them out. The liquid should be stored at room temperature and **not** refrigerated. Shake this product well before each dose. Keep all medication away from excessive heat, light or moisture. Keep your medication in its original container. Always keep medication out of the reach of children.

It is very important to take every dose of your medication in order for it to work correctly. If you miss a dose of ritonavir, take it as soon as you remember unless it is close to your next dose. If it is close to your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the normal time. Do not take two doses at once.

CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Do not take ritonavir if you have had a prior allergic reaction to ritonavir (as Norvir or Kaletra) or any component of the medication. This medicine should not be used together with amiodarone (Cordarone), astemizole (Hismanal), bepridil (Vascor), cisapride (Propulsid), dihydroergotamine (Migranal), ergotamine (Cafergot, Wygraine), flecainide (Tambocor), midazolam (Versed), pimozide (Orap), propafenone (Rythmol), quinidine (Cardioquin), terfenadine (Seldane), or triazolam (Halcion).

SIDE EFFECTS:

The most common side effects of ritonavir are nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, decreased appetite, changes in the taste of foods, sore muscles, throat irritation,

dizziness, drowsiness, rash, or sweating. Most of these side effects may go away with time. Changes in body fat may also occur with this class of drug. Tell your doctor if you experience loss of fat in the arms, legs and face or increased fat in the upper back and neck, breast, and abdomen. Ask your doctor how to manage these side effects with diet, exercise, or medication. This medication may also increase the values of some blood tests. Ritonavir may increase blood sugar, triglycerides, cholesterol and other important blood levels. These can increase the risk of other diseases. Make sure you keep all of your appointments to have blood work in order to monitor these side effects.

Warning: Contact your doctor immediately if you experience any of the conditions listed below. Stop taking ritonavir immediately and seek medical attention if you experience an allergic reaction (difficulty breathing; closing of your throat; swelling of your lips, tongue, or face; or hives). Call your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms: blistering skin rash or skin peeling; increased thirst, urination or extreme hunger; numbness, tingling, burning or pain in any body part (especially hands or feet); sudden and severe nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain; or yellow eyes or skin. Make sure you tell your doctor if you have a history of liver disease, kidney disease, diabetes, or hemophilia (a bleeding disorder). Ritonavir can aggravate all of these conditions.

Notify your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or breastfeeding. Ritonavir is not expected to harm an unborn baby. 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:

Alert: Find out about medications that should not be taken with ritonavir. Do not take ritonavir with the medications listed under “contraindications” without first talking to your doctor. Also, make sure your doctor knows if you are taking sildenafil (Viagra), rifabutin (Mycobutin), rifampin (Rifadin, Rifater, Rifamate), St. John’s wort, simvastatin (Zocor), lovastatin (Mevacor), atorvastatin (Lipitor), diazepam (Valium), clorazepate (Librium), flurazepam (Dalmane), zolpidem (Ambien), bupropion (Wellbutrin), clozapine (Clozaril), meperidine (Demerol), piroxicam (Feldene), or propoxyphene (Darvocet, Darvon). Birth control pills may also be less effective when used with ritonavir. Talk to your doctor about other methods of birth control. The liquid form of ritonavir contains alcohol and cannot be taken with disulfiram (Antabuse) or metronidazole (Flagyl). Smoking should also be avoided because it can decrease the effects of ritonavir.

This is not a complete list of interactions. Make sure your doctor knows all of the medications you are taking. Also, ask your doctor or pharmacist about any medications including over the counter, herbal, vitamin, and prescription products before using them with ritonavir..

References: see references 44-47