



The Information Exchange

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COMBIVIR® (Lamivudine and Zidovudine)

Please read this factsheet together with the patient information leaflet carefully before taking your medicine. If you have any questions or are unsure about anything, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Combivir is a preparation that contains both **zidovudine** and **lamivudine** in one tablet. Zidovudine and lamivudine both belong to a class of drugs called **nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs)**. NRTIs are used for the treatment of HIV infection, in combination with other anti-HIV drugs. If you would like more information about how these drugs work in the body, a leaflet is available. Please ask the pharmacist for details.

Before taking Combivir

Tell your doctor about:

- All other drugs that you are taking, including any that you buy over the counter in a community pharmacy and herbal medicines or recreational drugs
- Any previous allergy to any other medicines
- If you have ever had any liver disease
- If you have ever had any kidney disease

Taking your Combivir

- Combivir is available as a white tablet with "GXFC3" written on both sides, containing 300mg of zidovudine and 150mg of lamivudine.
- The usual dose is one tablet twice each day.
- If you need to take a lower dose of zidovudine or lamivudine for example if you have reduced kidney function, Combivir is not suitable for you. Your doctor will prescribe zidovudine and lamivudine separately.
- The doses should be spaced evenly throughout the day: try to take the doses as close as possible to twelve hours apart, and at the same times each day.
- There is no effect of food upon absorption; therefore you can take the tablets before, with or after food. Taking doses after food may help prevent nausea - this is usually due to zidovudine and may occur when you first start taking Combivir
- Combivir works best if there is a constant amount in your bloodstream. It is therefore very important to take the tablets regularly. If you forget a dose take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose anyway, forget about the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose.

Do not run out of Combivir if you are going on holiday and need additional supplies, tell your doctor. When receiving a supply from pharmacy, ensure that you have an adequate supply to last until your next appointment.

Other drugs and Combivir

Zidovudine can decrease some of your blood cells; some other drugs can also do this, for example ganciclovir, ribavirin and co-trimoxazole. Your doctor may decide to change some of your other medicines after starting Combivir.

Combivir should NOT be taken with rifampicin as it decreases the levels of zidovudine in your blood.

Combivir should not be taken in combination with Stavudine (D4T) or Emtricitabine (FTC)

Side effects

Combivir, like all other medicines, has some side effects. The most important ones affecting more than 1 in 100 patients are:

Zidovudine	Lamivudine
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Nausea▪ Vomiting▪ Headaches▪ Muscle pain▪ Lack of energy▪ Anaemia▪ Dizziness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Headache▪ Tiredness▪ Nausea▪ Vomiting▪ Diarrhoea▪ Abdominal pain or cramps▪ Insomnia

Some of these side effects may occur when you first start taking Combivir and frequently disappear after 4 or 5 weeks of treatment. If you experience any of these side effects or any other symptoms after you start Combivir tell your doctor who will advise you what to do. If you decide to stop taking Combivir it is important that you tell your doctor so that he or she can discuss other treatment options with you.

Combination antiretroviral therapy and zidovudine in particular has been associated with redistribution of body fat (lipodystrophy) in HIV positive patients including the loss of fat on the face, arms and legs and increased abdominal and back fat.

Lactic acidosis has been reported with the use of nucleoside analogues. If you experience the following symptoms, inform your doctor: nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, weight loss, rapid, deep breathing or muscle weakness.

Admission to hospital

If you are admitted to hospital please bring all your medicines with you. This is so the nurses can continue to give them to you on the ward. This is especially important for anti-HIV medication as it has to be taken regularly.

Storing your Combivir

Combivir tablets should be stored at room temperature

This information was prepared by the HIV/GUM pharmacy department at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. If you have any queries regarding the information, please call Kobler Pharmacist on 020 3315 5604

Updated December 2010
Review date December 2011