

Atazanavir (Reyataz[®])

This leaflet is designed to give you a general idea of the most important things you need to know about your new medicine. It is not supposed to replace the patient information leaflet (PIL) that comes with the medicine, but is designed to be read in conjunction with it. If you have any questions or are unsure about anything, ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What is atazanavir?

Atazanavir belongs to a group of drugs called protease inhibitors, often referred to as 'PIs'.

Atazanavir is used in combination with other antiretrovirals for the treatment of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Most people will need to take atazanavir with another drug, either ritonavir or cobicistat. Ritonavir and cobicistat are a type of drug called a 'pharmacokinetic enhancer' which boosts levels of atazanavir in your body. Without ritonavir or cobicistat, atazanavir may not be effective at controlling the virus.

Please speak to your clinic doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you would like more information about how these drugs work.

How should I take atazanavir?

There are a number of different doses of atazanavir. The most common dose is one 300mg capsule taken once daily with food. You will also need to take one ritonavir 100mg tablet, or one cobicistat 150mg tablet, with each dose of atazanavir.

How much food do I need to take with atazanavir?

There are no specific types or amounts of food that need to be taken with atazanavir. You can take atazanavir with a substantial snack, or up to 30 minutes after a main meal.

What are the common side effects with atazanavir?

Atazanavir, like all other medicines, has some side effects. Most of these are minor and will settle within a few days or weeks. Make sure you read the leaflet that came with atazanavir for a complete list.

- 'Stomach' side effects: Feeling sick (nausea), being sick (vomiting), diarrhoea, stomach pain or discomfort, indigestion.
- 'Head' side effects: Headache.
- Changes in blood test: Changes in some of your liver or kidney tests, or changes in cholesterol.
- Other side effects: Rash, jaundice.

Jaundice is a yellowing of the eyes or skin. Although jaundice due to atazanavir is usually harmless and disappears if your doctor changes your atazanavir to a different antiretroviral, you should always inform your doctor if you notice it.

If you experience any side effects, and either they are troubling you or you develop any new symptoms after you start atazanavir, tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist who will tell you what to do.

If you decide to take stop taking atazanavir, it is important that you tell your doctor first so that they can discuss other treatment options with you.

If you have a question about atazanavir or any of your medicines, speak to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Contact: kobler.pharmacy@chelwest.nhs.uk

Telephone: 020 3315 5604

What medicines should I avoid with atazanavir?

It is always important to make your doctor and pharmacist aware of any medicines you take to ensure that they are compatible with atazanavir and your other antiretrovirals. Make sure you read the patient information leaflet you received with atazanavir for a full list, but always tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any of the following before you take either atazanavir or the new medicine:

Medicine	Why do your doctor & pharmacist need to know about this?
Cholesterol medicines called statins	Statins are affected by atazanavir which may lead to more side effects. Your clinic doctor will help choose the right statin for you.
Inhalers or nasal sprays	Some inhalers and nasal sprays contain steroids which can build up in your body if taken with atazanavir, leading to side effects.
St John's wort for depression	This can reduce the levels of atazanavir within your body, meaning it may be less effective at suppressing the virus.
Medicines for stomach acid, stomach ulcers, heartburn or acid reflux disease	Medicines such as omeprazole and lansoprazole (known as proton pump inhibitors) or ranitidine (Zantac®) can stop you from absorbing atazanavir and so should not be taken without speaking to your clinic doctor or pharmacist.
Calcium or iron supplements, multivitamins, or other indigestion remedies	Medicines or supplements containing calcium, iron, magnesium, or aluminium can stop you from absorbing atazanavir properly. These should be taken at least 1 hour before or at least 2 hours after you take your atazanavir.
Contraceptives (birth control)	Some antiretrovirals can reduce the amount of contraceptive in your body, making it less effective. Your clinic will help choose the right method of contraception for you.

What if I:

Get a headache or just need a pain killer?

Paracetamol can be taken with atazanavir. Ibuprofen can also be taken, as long as you don't have any problems such as stomach ulcers or asthma, or unless your doctor has advised you to avoid NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) for any reason.

Get hayfever or have other allergies?

The antihistamines cetirizine and chlorphenamine can be taken with atazanavir. If your allergy is related to atazanavir (such as a rash) or any other medicines, speak to your doctor or pharmacist before taking any medicines. You should speak to your doctor or pharmacist before using any nasal sprays or getting any injections, to check for possible interactions with atazanavir and any other medicines you are taking.

Get diarrhoea?

For short-term diarrhoea relief, you can use loperamide. Remember to drink plenty of fluids. If you get a lot of diarrhoea and it lasts more than a few days, contact your clinic to ask for advice.

Get heartburn, reflux, indigestion or need medicines for stomach ulcers?

Antacids must be taken at least 1 hour before or 2 hours after atazanavir to make sure it is absorbed properly. Medicines such as omeprazole, lansoprazole or ranitidine may not be safe to take with atazanavir. If you need to take one of these medications, please speak to your HIV doctor or pharmacist **before** you start taking it.

Am prescribed or take something for my mood, such as an antidepressant or St John's wort?

Check with your clinic doctor or pharmacist before taking these. St John's wort can reduce the levels of some antiretrovirals within your body, meaning they may be less effective at suppressing the virus.

Currently take, or would like to take, supplements, including calcium or iron?

Most supplements can be taken with atazanavir, but always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking them. Supplements that contain calcium, iron or magnesium should be taken at least 1 hour before or 2 hour after atazanavir.

Miss my atazanavir!

Antiretrovirals work best if there is a constant amount of the drugs in your body. It is really important that you take them regularly. However, occasionally you may forget a dose. Don't worry if this happens, just follow the guidance below. If you are having problems remembering to take your medicines, speak with your clinic now and they may be able to help you.

- If you notice **within 18 hours** of the time you usually take atazanavir, you must take the tablet as soon as possible. Always take the tablet with food and with a dose of ritonavir or cobicistat (even if you have already taken ritonavir or cobicistat at the right time). Then take the next dose as usual.
- If you notice **18 hours or more after** the time you usually take atazanavir, then do not take the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose, with food, at your usual time.
- **Never** take a double dose to make up for missing one.