

## DIDANOSINE

**Other NAMES:** ddl, Videx EC™

### WHY is this drug prescribed?

Didanosine is an antiretroviral (anti-HIV) drug that is part of the nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTIs or Nukes) family. It is used together with other antiretrovirals to delay the progression of HIV infection. By doing this, your immune system should improve (increase in CD4<sup>+</sup> count) and you will be better protected against infections.

Didanosine does not cure AIDS or completely kill the HIV virus, but helps to prevent further damage by slowing down the production of new viruses. Treatment with didanosine does not reduce the risk of passing infection on to others. You will still be able to pass HIV by sexual contact, by blood transfer or by sharing needles. You should always use appropriate precautions to prevent passing HIV on to others.

### HOW should this drug be taken?

The dose of didanosine is adjusted based on your weight and kidney function.

Your dosage of didanosine (Videx EC™) is:

125 mg capsule  
200 mg capsule  
250 mg capsule  
400 mg capsule

\_\_\_ capsule (\_\_\_mg) once a day

The capsules must be swallowed whole. **Do not crush, open or chew the capsules.** The capsules must be taken on an empty stomach, either 1 hour before or 2 hours after eating.

### What should you do if you FORGET a dose?

If you miss a dose of didanosine, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is time for your next dose, do not double the dose, just carry on with your regular schedule.

### Why should you not forget to take this drug?

If you miss doses of didanosine, the amount of HIV virus in your blood (known as the viral load) will start increasing again and your immune system will be further damaged. A few missed doses can be enough for didanosine to stop being active. A phenomenon known as **resistance**. When this happens, other antiretrovirals that work in a similar way to didanosine may also become inactive. **Therefore, missing doses of didanosine can decrease treatment options for the future.** Even if you do not feel well, you should always take your doses of didanosine. Please do not stop didanosine without talking to your doctor first.

### What ADVERSE EFFECTS can this drug cause? What should you do about them?

Didanosine may cause tingling, burning or numbness in the hands and feet (peripheral neuropathy). These symptoms can

disappear if recognized quickly and if the dose of the drug is decreased or if the drug is stopped. If you develop any of these symptoms, please inform your doctor or pharmacist.

Rarely, didanosine can cause inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis). Symptoms include severe abdominal pain with or without nausea and vomiting. Consult a doctor immediately if this occurs.

Other adverse events include diarrhea, nausea, headache, fever, insomnia, dizziness, rash, muscle and joint aches, and mild confusion.

Very rarely, didanosine can cause leucopenia (a decrease in the number of white blood cells so that you have a higher risk of bacterial infection) and an abnormal liver function. These adverse effects usually occur after you have been on the drug for a long period of time. Blood tests will be done regularly to check for any changes in your white blood cell count and to check your liver and pancreas function. Inform your doctor if you notice any symptoms of fever, chills, shortness of breath, fatigue, abdominal pain and muscle pain.

**It is important that you keep your doctor appointments and come for your laboratory tests so that your progress can be followed.**

### What other PRECAUTIONS should you follow while using this drug?

You must make sure that you are taking the right dose. If you take higher doses of didanosine than what is prescribed, you

may increase the chance of having adverse effects. If you take lower doses of didanosine than what is prescribed, the HIV virus may become resistant to didanosine.

It is recommended that you do not drink alcohol while taking didanosine, as alcohol may worsen the adverse effects.

Certain drugs can increase or decrease the effect of didanosine. Also, didanosine might influence the effect of other drugs you are taking. Inform your doctor and pharmacist of all prescribed and non-prescribed drugs you are taking. As well, you should inform them of natural products you are taking. If you wish to start a new drug or natural product, please consult with your pharmacist before doing so.

For example, taking other drugs that cause tingling, burning and numbness in the hands and feet (peripheral neuropathy) may increase the risk of developing this adverse effect.

Please inform your doctor if you are pregnant. Your doctor can recommend the appropriate treatment to help to reduce the risk of passing the HIV virus on to your baby. Breastfeeding is NOT recommended if you have HIV as you might transmit the virus to your baby through your breast milk.

### **How should this drug be STORED?**

Didanosine capsules should be stored in a cool (15-30°C) dry place, protected from light and well out of the reach of children. Ensure that the drug has not expired by

checking the expiry date (“EXP”) shown on the outside of the package.

Do not store in your bathroom or kitchen, as heat and moisture may cause the drug to be less active.

**If you have any questions or concerns about this drug or if you are experiencing adverse effects, please discuss them with your pharmacist, doctor or nurse.**

**Write questions or concerns down to ensure they are addressed.**

The following pharmacist is available to answer questions:

**Pharmacist:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Reference: Product Monograph. Videx EC® (didanosine EC). Montréal, Qc, Canada: Bristol-Myers Squibb, 2009. Prepared by the Ontario HIV Pharmacy Professional Specialty Group, 2003. Reviewed 2009.

Additional medication fact sheets and updates may be found at : [www.hivclinic.ca](http://www.hivclinic.ca)

# ***DIDANOSINE*** ***(ddI,*** ***Videx EC®)***

## ***MEDICATION***

## ***FACT SHEET***