

# RALTEGRAVIR

**Other NAMES:** Isentress®

## WHY is this drug prescribed?

Raltegravir is an antiretroviral (anti-HIV) drug that is used together with other antiretrovirals to delay the progression of HIV-1 infection. It works by blocking the enzyme integrase. By taking this drug in combination with other antiretroviral agents your doctor has prescribed, your immune system should improve (increase in CD4<sup>+</sup> count) better protecting you against infections and your viral load should decrease because the enzyme needed to produce more viruses is being blocked.

Raltegravir does not cure AIDS or completely kill the HIV virus, but helps to prevent further damage by slowing down the production of new viruses. You should always use appropriate precautions to prevent passing HIV on to others.

## HOW should this drug be taken?

Raltegravir is currently available in 3 different formulations:

- Pink film coated tablet. Each tablet contains 400 mg of raltegravir.
- Pale orange chewable tablet (orange-banana flavoured). Each tablet contains 100 mg of raltegravir.

- Pale yellow chewable tablet (orange-banana flavoured). Each tablet contains 25 mg of raltegravir.

The usual adult dose of raltegravir is 400 mg twice daily, with or without food. The drug must be taken in a combination regimen with other antiretrovirals.

Your dosage is:

- PINK tablet (raltegravir 400 mg):

\_\_\_\_ tablet (\_\_\_\_mg) \_\_\_\_ times a day with or without food.

- Pale ORANGE tablet (raltegravir 100 mg):

\_\_\_\_ tablets (\_\_\_\_mg) \_\_\_\_ times a day with or without food.

- Pale YELLOW tablet (raltegravir 25 mg):

\_\_\_\_ tablets (\_\_\_\_mg) \_\_\_\_ times a day with or without food.

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

If you miss a dose of raltegravir, take it as soon as you remember and carry on with your regular schedule.

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

If you miss doses of raltegravir, the amount of virus in your blood (known as the HIV viral load) will start increasing again and

your immune system will be further damaged. A few missed doses can be enough for raltegravir to stop being active, a phenomenon known as **resistance**. When this happens, other antiretrovirals that work in a similar way as raltegravir may also become inactive. **Therefore, missing doses of raltegravir can decrease treatment options for the future.** Please do not stop raltegravir or change your dose without talking to your doctor first.

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

Some people taking raltegravir will have symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, rash, cough and fever. At the start of using raltegravir, some patients develop an inflammatory response or show evidence of an underlying infection (pneumonia, herpes, or tuberculosis). Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you develop unusual symptoms, as they signal a need for evaluation and treatment.

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?

Certain drugs can increase or decrease the effect of raltegravir. The dose of raltegravir may need to be increased if you are taking certain drugs such as rifampin.

- Antacids containing **aluminum or magnesium** (e.g., liquid Maalox®, Diovol®, Mylanta®, etc) should **NOT** be used with raltegravir because they may decrease the effect of raltegravir.
- Antacids containing calcium carbonate (e.g., Tums®) may be taken at the same time as raltegravir.

Inform your doctor and pharmacist of all prescribed and non-prescribed drugs you are taking. As well, you should inform them of natural products or recreational (street drugs) you are taking. If you wish to start a new drug or natural product, please consult with your pharmacist before doing so.

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

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

Raltegravir 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.

**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:

Merck Frosst Canada Ltd, Product Monograph Isentress® (raltegravir). Kirkland, QC, Canada: January 20, 2015.

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

***RALTEGRAVIR***  
***(Isentress®)***

***MEDICATION***

***FACT SHEET***