

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 is intended for use in treatment-experienced adults who have shown resistance to a number of antiretroviral regimens. 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⁺ 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. Treatment with raltegravir 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 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:

400 mg (____ pink tablet) twice daily

What should you do if you FORGET a dose?

If you miss a dose of raltegravir, 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 raltegravir, 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 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 without talking to your doctor first.

What ADVERSE 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 patient's 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. Also, raltegravir 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 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.

The doses of certain drugs may need to be increased if you are taking raltegravir.

Raltegravir should NOT be taken if you are pregnant. Please inform your doctor if you believe you are pregnant or if you wish to become pregnant in the near future. A registry has been established to monitor patients on raltegravir while pregnant. Please inform your doctor if you are pregnant, as he/she is able to register your exposure at 1-800-567-2594 and can recommend an 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: Product Monograph Isentress™ (raltegravir). Kirkland, QC, Canada: Merck Frosst Canada Ltd, 2008. Prepared by the Ontario HIV Pharmacy Professional Specialty Group, 2009.

Additional medication fact sheets and updates may be found at: www.hivclinic.ca

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(Isentress™)

MEDICATION

FACT SHEET