

ATAZANAVIR

Other NAMES: BMS-232632, Reyataz®

WHY is this drug prescribed?

Atazanavir is an antiretroviral (anti-HIV) drug that belongs to a class of drugs called **protease inhibitors**. Protease inhibitors interfere with a different step in virus reproduction than other classes of drugs previously available to fight HIV. Atazanavir is used together with other antiretrovirals to delay the progression of HIV infection. By doing this, your immune system should improve (increase in CD4⁺ count) and you will be better protected against infections.

Atazanavir 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 atazanavir 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?

Atazanavir is available as 100, 150, 200 and 300 mg capsules. The recommended dose of atazanavir is 400 mg once daily, or 300 mg once daily with 100 mg ritonavir once daily. Depending on the other medications in your regimen, the dose of atazanavir may need to be adjusted.

Your dosage is:

- 100 mg capsule
- 150 mg capsule
- 200 mg capsule
- 300 mg capsule

___ capsules (___mg) once a day

It is preferable to take atazanavir with food to obtain better absorption and to decrease stomach upset.

Capsules should be swallowed unchewed, with water or some other non-alcoholic drink. You should avoid excessive consumption of alcohol during your treatment.

What should you do if you FORGET a dose?

If you miss a dose of atazanavir, 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 atazanavir, 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 atazanavir to stop being active. A phenomenon known as **resistance**. When this happens, other antiretrovirals that work in a similar way as atazanavir may also become inactive. **Therefore, missing doses of atazanavir can decrease treatment options for the future.** Even if you do not feel well, you should always take your doses of atazanavir. Please do not stop atazanavir without talking to your doctor first.

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

The most commonly reported adverse effects include: **feeling weak/tired, nausea, diarrhea, dizziness, fever, headache, abdominal pain, or tingling sensation or numbness in hands, feet, or around lips.** If these effects occur and bother you, please call the clinic or discuss them at your next visit.

Occasionally, **yellowing of the skin or eyes** may occur. These effects may be due to increases in bilirubin levels in your blood. Although these effects may not be damaging to your liver, skin, or eyes, it is important to tell your healthcare provider promptly if they occur.

Rarely, some people may develop a skin rash. If this occurs, please consult your doctor.

Regular blood tests will be done to detect any changes in your liver or pancreas function. In particular, you may have an increase in your bilirubin or blood sugar level. Though atazanavir has little impact on cholesterol and triglyceride levels, your doctor will likely check these as well.

The long-term effects of atazanavir are unknown at this time. Abnormal weight gain or changes in body shape have been reported with other protease inhibitors. Further studies are being carried out to see if atazanavir may cause these effects.

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

Certain drugs can increase or decrease the effect of atazanavir. Also, atazanavir 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.

The following drugs should not be taken with atazanavir:

- Astemizole (Hismanal®)
- Cisapride (Prepulsid®)
- Ergot derivatives [Ergotamine (Cafergot®, Bellergal®, Ergodryl™, Gravergol®), ergonovine, dihydroergotamine (Migranal®), methylergonovine (Methergine®)]
- Midazolam (Versed®)
- Omeprazole (Losec®), lansoprazole (Prevacid®), pantoprazole (Pantoloc®), rabeprazole (Pariet®), esomeprazole (Nexium®)
- Pimozide (Orap®)
- Rifampin (e.g. Rifadin®, Rimactane®, Rofact™)
- Triazolam (Halcion®)
- Terfenadine (Seldane®)
- Voriconazole (Vfend®)

Please inform your physician or pharmacist if you are taking any of the above drugs so that an alternative drug may be selected.

Atazanavir should not be taken at the same time as antacids such as TUMS™, Rolaids™, Maalox™, etc. If you need to take these drugs, take them 1 hour before or 2 hours after atazanavir.

Also, anti-ulcer drugs such as ranitidine (Zantac®), famotidine (Pepcid®), omeprazole (Losec®), lansoprazole (Prevacid®), pantoprazole (Pantoloc®), rabeprazole (Pariet®) and esomeprazole (Nexium™) may decrease the absorption and activity of atazanavir. Talk to your pharmacist or doctor if you are taking one of these drugs.

The safety of atazanavir has not been established during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Please inform your doctor if you are pregnant. 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?

Atazanavir should be stored in a cool (15 - 25°C) dry place, protected from light and well out of the reach of children. Atazanavir dispersible powder for oral administration should be protected from moisture.

Ensure that the drug has not expired by checking the expiry date ("EXP") shown on the outside of the package.

Do not store where there is heat and moisture (for example, in the bathroom or near the stove) as the drug may become 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: Atazanavir (Reyataz®) Product Monograph. Bristol-Myers Squibb, Montreal, Canada, 2009. Prepared by the Ontario HIV Pharmacy Professional Specialty Group, 2004. Updated 2009.

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

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MEDICATION

FACT SHEET