

# FAMCICLOVIR

**Other names:** Famvir®

## WHY is this drug prescribed?

Famciclovir is an antiviral agent used to treat infections such as genital herpes (HSV) and herpes zoster (shingles). Herpes simplex causes small, fluid-filled blisters that break down into ulcers/sores that may be itchy or painful. These blisters contain many infectious herpes simplex virus particles. Famciclovir helps stop the virus from spreading, reduces the number of painful blisters and also helps them to heal more quickly. If you start taking famciclovir as soon as you feel an episode starting, it may be possible to actually prevent the blisters from developing. It may also be used in the prevention of recurrences of genital herpes.

## HOW should this drug be taken?

Famciclovir is available as 125 mg, 250 mg, and 500 mg tablets. The dose of famciclovir will depend on whether your doctor has prescribed the drug for the treatment of shingles or for genital herpes. The dose may need to be adjusted if you have kidney problems.

The recommended dose used to treat recurrent genital herpes infections is 125 mg twice daily for 5 days. If you are also HIV infected, the recommended dose is 500 mg twice daily for 7 days.

The recommended dose of famciclovir used to treat shingles in adults is 500 mg three times daily for 7 days.

In both cases, therapy should be started as early as possible following onset of signs and symptoms.

The recommended dose to prevent recurrent infections of genital herpes is 250 mg two times daily. If you are HIV infected, the recommended dose is 500 mg two times daily.

Your dosage is:

125 mg tablet  
250 mg tablet  
500 mg tablet

\_\_\_\_ tablet (\_\_\_\_ mg) \_\_\_\_ times a day

You may take famciclovir with or without food. Swallow each tablet whole with water. Do not chew it. It is important to finish all the tablets you have been given even if you start to feel better.

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

If you miss a dose of famciclovir take it as soon as possible, then just carry on with your regular dosing schedule. If you remember your missed dose close to the time for your next dose (ie. within 2 hours), do not double your dose. Continue with your regular dosing schedule.

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

Famciclovir is generally well tolerated. **Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, or headache** may occur. If these effects occur and are bothersome, let your doctor or pharmacist know. Call your doctor immediately if you think you have an **allergic reaction (ie. rash)** to famciclovir.

**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?

Herpes infections cause painful blisters on the skin. The fluid in these blisters contains the virus which causes the disease. The infections can be easily spread to you or other people. If you touch your skin sores, wash your hands immediately afterwards. Avoid intimate contact with others when the disease is visible.

Let your doctor know if you have had an allergic reaction or adverse effect to other antiviral agents such as valacyclovir (Valtrex®), acyclovir (Zovirax®), ganciclovir (Cytovene®) or valganciclovir (Valcyte™).

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

It is especially important to let them know if you are taking probenecid (Benemid®), cimetidine (Tagamet®), steroids (eg. prednisone) or any anti-cancer drugs before starting famciclovir.

Since famciclovir is removed from the body by your kidneys, it is important to inform your doctor if you have kidney problems prior to taking this drug. Also tell your doctor if you have HIV, AIDS, or any kind of bone marrow disease.

The safety of famciclovir has not been established during pregnancy or breastfeeding. Please discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist if this is a concern.

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

Famciclovir should be stored in a cool (15-30°C) dry place, protected from light and well out of the reach of children. Do not store in the bathroom or kitchen, as heat and moisture may cause the drug to be less active.

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

***FAMCICLOVIR***

***MEDICATION***

***FACT SHEET***

Reference: Product monograph Famvir® (famciclovir). Dorval, Qc, Canada: Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada, 2008. 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)