

# EMTRICITABINE/ TENOFIVIR ALAFENAMIDE

**Other NAMES:** Descovy® (combination of emtricitabine 200 mg and tenofovir alafenamide 10mg or 25mg in each tablet).

## WHY is this drug prescribed?

This tablet contains tenofovir alafenamide and emtricitabine, two antiretroviral (anti-HIV) reverse transcriptase inhibitors (“nukes”). It is given 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.

Tenofovir alafenamide and emtricitabine do not cure AIDS or completely kill the HIV virus, but helps to prevent further damage by slowing down the production of new viruses.

## HOW should this drug be taken?

Generally, the dose is 1 tablet once a day, with or without food.

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

If you miss a dose of Descovy® and it is less than 18 hours from when you normally take it, take the dose. If it is more than 18 hours from when you normally take Descovy®, do not take the dose and wait

until your next scheduled dose. Do not take 2 doses of Descovy® at the same time, and do not take more than 1 dose in the same day.

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

If you miss doses of this drug, 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 the two components, tenofovir alafenamide and emtricitabine, to stop being active, a phenomenon known as **resistance**. When this happens, other antiretrovirals that work in a similar way as tenofovir alafenamide and emtricitabine may also become inactive. **Therefore, missing doses of this drug can decrease treatment options for the future.** Please do not stop this drug without talking to your doctor first.

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

Most adverse effects reported with tenofovir alafenamide and emtricitabine are mild, and may include nausea, diarrhea, fatigue, and headache. Skin discolouration on the palms and soles (small spots or freckles) may also happen. If these effects occur and are bothersome, please discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist.

Rare but serious adverse effects that have been observed are damage to the liver, especially in patients with long-term

hepatitis B or C. If you have hepatitis B and are taking Descovy®, do not stop taking the medication without consulting your doctor first. Stopping Descovy® may worsen the hepatitis B infection. Changes in bone density and high levels of acid in the blood may also occur. Tests must be done regularly to look for these adverse effects.

The long-term effects of tenofovir alafenamide and emtricitabine are unknown at this time. As more people use these drugs for longer periods of time, other adverse effects may occur.

**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 than what is prescribed, you may increase the chance of having side effects. If you take lower doses of than what is prescribed, the HIV virus may become resistant to tenofovir alafenamide and emtricitabine.

Certain drugs can increase or decrease the effect of tenofovir alafenamide and emtricitabine. Drugs that interact with Descovy® and may alter its effect include:

- Anticonvulsants:  
Carbamazepine (Tegretol®, Carbatrol®, Eptol®), oxcarbazepine (Trileptal®), phenobarbital and phenytoin (Dilantin®)
- Antifungals:

Ketoconazole (Nizoral®), Itraconazole (Sporanox®)

• Antimycobacterials:

Rifampin (Rifadin®, Rofact®), Rifapentine (Priftin®)

• Antivirals:

Tipranavir (Aptivus®)

Drugs that should not be taken with Descovy® are:

- Other medications containing tenofovir alafenamide (Biktarvy®, Genvoya®, Odefsey®, Symtuza®)
- Medications containing tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (Atripla®, Complera®, Stribild®, Truvada®, Viread®)
- Other medications containing emtricitabine or lamivudine (Atripla®, Complera®, Emtriva®, Genvoya®, Stribild®, Truvada®, 3TC, Combivir®, Heptovir®, Kivexa®, Triumeq®, Trizivir®)
- Adefovir (Hepsera®)

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. Some products such as St. John's wort influence the effect of Descovy® and should not be taken together. 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. 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 can transmit the virus to your baby through your breast milk.

**How should this drug be STORED?**

Descovy® tablets should be stored in a cool (below 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 Descovy™ (tenofovir alafenamide/emtricitabine). Gilead Canada Inc, Mississauga, ON, 2016. Prepared by the Ontario HIV Pharmacy Professional Specialty Group, updated 2016.

Additional medication fact sheets and updates may be found at: <https://hivclinic.ca>

***EMTRICITABINE***

**+**

***TENOFOVIR***

***(DESCOVY®)***

***MEDICATION***

***FACT SHEET***