

INTRAVENOUS GANCICLOVIR

Other names: Cytovene® Injection

WHY is this drug prescribed?

Intravenous (I.V.) ganciclovir is an antiviral used for the initial treatment of cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection (ie: retinitis). This drug can also be used to prevent a relapse of CMV after the initial treatment. You should have your eyes examined regularly.

HOW should this drug be taken?

The usual dose of intravenous ganciclovir for the initial treatment of CMV is 5 mg / kg every 12 hours for 14 to 21 days. To prevent a relapse of CMV, the usual dose is 5 mg / kg once daily every day of the week, or 6 mg / kg once daily 5 days a week. The dose may need to be adjusted if you have kidney problems.

The drug should be given as a constant intravenous injection over a minimum of 1 hour.

Your dosage is:

____ mg every ____ hours given over
____ hour(s), ____ days a week

Each dose of ganciclovir is put in 100 or 250 mL bags. The I.V. solution should be warmed up to room temperature before administration. You may accomplish this by taking your dose out of the refrigerator 30

minutes before you plan to infuse it. Please try to take your ganciclovir dose at the same time(s) every day.

Ganciclovir will be supplied to you by _____

What should you do if you FORGET a dose?

If you miss a dose of ganciclovir, 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.

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

The most serious adverse effect of ganciclovir is a **fall in the number of white blood cells**. This can increase your risk of developing infections as white blood cells are needed to fight infections. Ganciclovir can also **decrease the number of platelets** in the blood. This can increase your risk of bleeding or bruising as platelets are needed to help clot your blood. Your **red blood cells may also decrease** which could make you feel tired or short of breath. Blood tests will be done regularly to check for any changes in these values. If there are any problems, the dose of ganciclovir will be reduced or the drug will be stopped. Inform your doctor if you notice any symptoms of fever, chills, shortness of breath, racing heartbeat, fatigue, bleeding or bruising.

If **confusion, mood swings, abnormal thought or dreams**, or a **rash** occur while taking ganciclovir, please call your doctor or pharmacist.

Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, fever or headaches may occur. If these effects occur and are bothersome, please call your doctor or pharmacist or discuss them at your next visit.

Irritation (redness) or pain may develop at the injection site (forearm) when the ganciclovir is given into the smaller veins in the arm. This problem may be prevented by slowing the rate of infusion and changing the I.V. site more frequently. This problem is also avoided by infusing the drug into a central vein (e.g. using Port-a-Cath or Hickman central venous catheters).

Your blood will also be checked for any changes in liver or kidney function.

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?

If while handling the drug, it accidentally spills, avoid contact with your skin, eyes, or mucous membranes (eg. nose). Wear rubber gloves while cleaning up any spills. If the drug comes in contact with your skin or mucous membranes, wash the area thoroughly with soap and water, and rinse thoroughly with water.

Do not stop taking this drug without checking with your doctor first, even if you begin to feel better. Maintain your regular visits and inform your doctor of new medical problems that develop while you are taking ganciclovir.

Ganciclovir may cause temporary or permanent sterility or infertility in both men and women. Birth defects have occurred in animals, therefore ganciclovir is NOT recommended during pregnancy, and men and women should use barrier contraception (ie: condoms) during and for 90 days following treatment. It is not known if ganciclovir is excreted in breast milk. Because of abnormalities that have occurred in animals treated with ganciclovir, it is possible that nursing infants may also be affected, therefore ganciclovir should NOT be given to breastfeeding mothers. Please discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist if these issues are a concern to you.

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

Since ganciclovir 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.

Certain drugs can increase or decrease the effect of ganciclovir. Also, ganciclovir 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®), didanosine (Videx™), or zidovudine (Retrovir®).

How should this drug be STORED?

The diluted ganciclovir intravenous solution should be kept in the refrigerator (2 - 8°C). It is recommended that the solution be used within 24 hours of dilution. Keep well out of the reach of children.

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 Cytovene® (ganciclovir). Mississauga, On, Canada: Hoffmann-La Roche Limited, 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

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MEDICATION

FACT SHEET