

# VALGANCICLOVIR

Other names: Valcyte®

## WHY is this drug prescribed?

Valganciclovir is a drug used for the treatment of cytomegalovirus (CMV) retinitis. It can be given to treat this eye infection and to prevent the CMV infection from progressing. You should have your eyes examined regularly.

## HOW should this drug be taken?

Valganciclovir is available as 450 mg tablets.

The valganciclovir dose for treatment of newly diagnosed CMV retinitis is 900 mg (2 x 450mg) twice daily.

Once the retinitis has been stabilized (usually after 3 weeks or so of therapy), a maintenance dose of 900mg (2 x 450 mg) once daily may be used.

The doses may need to be adjusted if you have kidney problems.

Valganciclovir should be taken with food.

Your dosage is:

450 mg tablet

\_\_\_tablets(\_\_\_mg)\_\_\_times a day

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

If you miss a dose of valganciclovir, 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 valganciclovir 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. Valganciclovir 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 valganciclovir 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 valganciclovir, 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.

Your blood will also be checked for any changes in liver and 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?

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 valganciclovir.

Valganciclovir may cause temporary or permanent sterility or infertility in both men and women. Birth defects have occurred in animals, therefore valganciclovir 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 valganciclovir is excreted in breast milk.

Because of abnormalities that have occurred in animals treated with valganciclovir, it is possible that nursing infants may also be affected, therefore valganciclovir 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 ganciclovir (Cytovene®).

Since valganciclovir 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 valganciclovir. Also, valganciclovir 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?**

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

Reference: Product monograph Valcyte® (valganciclovir). 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](http://www.hivclinic.ca)

# ***VALGANCICLOVIR***

## ***MEDICATION***

## ***FACT SHEET***