Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand
Waitaha Canterbury

ABACAVIR

a-bak-a-veer

What does it do?

Abacavir is used with other medicines to control HIV.

Before you start

- Tell your doctor if you have liver problems, or if you have ever had hepatitis B or C.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.
- *Abacavir* can cause a serious allergic reaction. This is more likely to occur if you have a certain gene. You will be given a blood test to check if you have this gene.

How should you take it?

Take *abacavir* regularly as directed with a glass of water. You can take it with or without food.

It is very important to take *abacavir* regularly. If you often forget to take it, it may not work as well and may increase your chance of an allergic reaction. Do not stop taking it without talking to your doctor first, unless you get a skin rash and/or fever (see Side effects). If you stop taking it for any reason, talk with your doctor before you restart.

What if you forget a dose?

If it is nearly time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the usual time. Otherwise, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. Do not take two doses at the same time.

Can you take other medicines?

Some medicines available without a prescription may react with *abacavir* including:

- orlistat (Xenical®)

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products or recreational drugs.

What side effects might you notice?

Side Effects	Recommended action
Symptoms of allergy including: fever and/or skin rash, skin peeling or blisters with nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach pain, shortness of breath, or flu-like symptoms	Stop taking and see your doctor immediately
Headache Stomach upset	Tell your doctor if troublesome

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Other information:

- You will need regular blood tests while taking *abacavir* to check if it is causing problems with your liver. You will also need blood tests to check your viral load.
- As your HIV comes under control, your immune system begins to recover. It may start fighting infections better than before which may make you unwell for a while. Your doctor may call this Immune Reconstitution Inflammatory Syndrome (IRIS).
- Weight gain may occur with treatment for HIV. Discuss this with your health professional.