

Acyclovir

Why is this medication prescribed?

This medication is used in certain people to treat outbreaks of herpes simplex infection of the skin (e.g., genitals), mucous membrane areas (e.g., mouth, nose), or brain. It is also used in certain people to treat shingles infection. The viruses that cause these infections live in the body quietly until an outbreak occurs. Acyclovir does not cure these infections, but can speed healing of the sores, decrease pain/itching/formation of new sores, and lower the risk of other problems from the virus (e.g., infection spreading to other parts of the body/organs, persistent pain after sores heal).

How should this medicine be used?

This medication is given as an injection through a needle placed into a vein. Your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare provider will give you this injection. The medicine must be given slowly through an IV infusion, and can take at least 1 hour to complete.

Treatment with acyclovir should be started as soon as possible after the first appearance of symptoms (such as tingling, burning, blisters).

Use each disposable needle only one time. Throw away used needles in a puncture-proof container (ask your pharmacist where you can get one and how to dispose of it). Keep this container out of the reach of children and pets.

What special precautions should I follow?

Drink plenty of water while you are taking acyclovir to keep your kidneys working properly.

Use this medication for the entire length of time prescribed by your doctor. Your symptoms may get better before the infection is completely treated. Acyclovir will not treat a viral infection such as the common cold or flu.

Lesions caused by herpes viruses should be kept as clean and dry as possible. Wearing loose clothing may help to prevent irritation of the lesions.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

Use the medication as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and use the medicine at the next regularly scheduled time. **Do not** use extra medicine to make up the missed dose.

What side effects can this medication cause?

Seek emergency medical attention if you think you have used too much of this medicine.

Overdose symptoms may include agitation, seizure (convulsions), hallucinations, and urinating less than usual or not at all.

Serious Side effects:

- urinating less than usual or not at all;
- fever, chills, body aches, flu symptoms;
- a red, blistering, peeling skin rash;
- jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes);
- swelling, pain, tenderness, or skin changes where the injection was given;
- pale skin, easy bruising or bleeding, weakness; or
- confusion, tremors, agitation, tiredness, hallucinations, seizure (convulsions).

Other side effects:

- nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, loss of appetite;
- muscle pain, numbness or tingling;
- lack of coordination;
- sleep problems (insomnia);
- headache, feeling light-headed; or
- swelling in your hands or feet.

What storage conditions are needed for this medicine?

Store the vials of powder at room temperature between 15-25 degrees C. The mixed vial should be used within 12 hours, and the diluted solution should be used within 24 hours. Keep all medicines away from children and pets.

In case of emergency/overdose

In case of overdose, call your local poison control center. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call local emergency services.

What other information should I know?

Before using acyclovir, tell your doctor if you are also taking probenecid . If you are using probenecid, you may need a dose adjustments or special tests during treatment with acyclovir.

There may be other drugs that can interact with acyclovir. Tell your doctor about all the prescription and over-the-counter medications you use. This includes vitamins, minerals, herbal products, and drugs prescribed by other doctors. Do not start using a new medication without telling your doctor.