How does this medication work?

Atazanavir is an antiretroviral drug that acts by preventing multiplication of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Atazanavir is a potent protease inhibitor. It inhibits viral replication by preventing the maturation of new copies of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Atazanavir is used in combination with other antiretroviral drugs to slow progression of the disease and reduce the risk of opportunistic infections (AIDS-related infections).

Atazanavir does not cure AIDS or kill the virus. There is a permanent risk of transmitting HIV either through sexual or blood contact. It is therefore essential that precautions always be taken (latex condoms, clean syringes, etc.).

Fertile women must use an effective means of birth control.

How do I take this medication?

Your dosage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atazanavir</th>
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<tr>
<td>• 2 capsules of ____ mg</td>
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<tr>
<td>• once daily</td>
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Swallow the capsule whole with water. Do not break, chew or crush it.

It is important to take your antiretroviral medicine properly - i.e. never forget a dose, follow the instructions on how to take the medicine, and always keep on with your treatment.

In this way, you will prevent resistance (HIV’s ability to recognize and defeat the effect of the medication) and avoid treatment failure (loss of efficacy of the antiretroviral treatment), which would result in an increased viral load and a lower number of CD4 cells, which are the ones that help your body fight infection.

Nearly everyone tends to relax their compliance with the treatment at some point. The key to success is motivation. Consult members of your care team so that they can explain the benefits of the treatment you are having. They can also suggest ways that will help you maintain it properly.

Never stop your treatment without first speaking to your physician.

What if I forget to take a dose?

Take the dose you missed as soon as possible and then continue with your regular schedule.

If it is nearly time for your next dose, however, just take that one at the usual time. Do not double up doses.
What are the side effects of this medication?

Atazanavir is generally better tolerated than other antiretrovirals of the same class. The main side effect known as of now is **hyperbilirubinemia**. It is detected by an increase of bilirubin in your blood and can manifest as yellowing of the skin and the white part of the eyes. The hyperbilirubinemia associated to atazanavir is most often asymptomatic. It is necessary to stop the medication in only 1% of patients.

Other possible side effects of atazanavir include stomach pain, nausea, diarrhea, headache.

Atazanavir may cause a skin rash. Sometimes the rash is mild, in which case your doctor can treat it with an antihistamine (Benadryl®, Atarax®, etc.) or an anti-inflammatory agent (cream). In rare cases, however, treatment must be stopped.

If the reaction is strong (i.e., you have one or more of the following symptoms: fever, swelling, blisters, mouth ulcers, bloodshot eyes, muscle and joint aches), your doctor will stop atazanavir.

**If you get a rash, contact your doctor immediately.**

Atazanavir does not have an effect on cholesterol and triglycerides.

There have been changes in the way the heart beats (heart rhythm changes). **Call your doctor or pharmacist immediately if you get dizzy or lightheaded.** These could be symptoms of a heart problem.

The long term effects of atazanavir are not yet known. Drugs in the same class may cause the following side effects: diabetes, increased breasts size, accumulation of fat around the waist and, more rarely, the neck, accompanied by thinning of the legs, arms, buttocks and face. The medications responsible for these effects and the underlying mechanism are as yet unknown.

Inform your doctor and your pharmacist of any troublesome side effects.

Can I take atazanavir with my other medications?

- **Indinavir (Crixivan®)**
  Atazanavir should not be taken with indinavir since both drugs can increase the concentration of bilirubin in your blood.

- **Antacids such as Maalox® and Diovol®**
  Take atazanavir 2 hours before or 1 hour after antacids.

- **Other drugs used for gastric acidity:**
  - cimetidine (Tagamet®), esomeprazole (Nexium®), famotidine (Pepcid®),
  - lansoprazole (Prevacid®), nizatidine (Axid®), omeprazole (Losec®),
  - pantoprazole (Pantoloc®), ranitidine (Zantac®)
  These drugs may decrease the absorption of atazanavir. Usually, they should not be taken with atazanavir. **Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any of these drugs.** Note that some of them can be obtained without a prescription.

- **Sildenafil (Viagra®), tadalafil (Cialis®), vardenafil (Levitra®)**
  Atazanavir can increase the risk of side effects associated with these drugs.

- **Millepertuis (St. John’s wort)**
  St. John's wort can decrease the efficacy of atazanavir and possibly allow the virus to develop resistance. **Do not take St. John's wort while you are taking atazanavir.**

Atazanavir may interact with a number of drugs. Consult your doctor or pharmacist before taking any new prescription or non-prescription medication, natural product or recreational drug.

**Avoid consumption of grapefruit juice.**
Can I drink alcohol if I’m on atazanavir?

Avoid excessive or regular consumption of alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, spirits), as this may interact with some of your medications.

However, do not miss a dose of your medication because you want to have an alcoholic drink. Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, reasonable (social) consumption should not damage your health.

What if I’m pregnant or breast-feeding?

We still do not know the effects of atazanavir in pregnant women. Talk to your doctor if you want to take atazanavir and are pregnant or want to become pregnant.

Since the virus can be transmitted through maternal milk, breast-feeding is not recommended in HIV-positive women.

Storage

Keep atazanavir in a dry place at room temperature (15-30°C or 59-86°F). Avoid humidity (bathrooms, etc.).

Keep in a tightly closed container out of sight and reach of children.

General Advice

Always keep your appointments with your doctor and the care team, so that your health can be closely monitored.

If you have any questions about your medications or need help to schedule when to take them, please contact your doctor or pharmacist, who is familiar with what you are taking.

Contact person: _______________________

Telephone: _______________________