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

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

Ritonavir 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>Ritonavir</th>
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| 1) From ______ to _________  
____ 100-mg capsule(s)  
____ times a day  
____ mL of 80-mg/mL solution |
| 2) From ______ to _________  
____ 100-mg capsule(s)  
____ times a day  
____ mL of 80-mg/mL solution |
| 3) From ______ to _________  
____ 100-mg capsule(s)  
____ times a day  
____ mL of 80-mg/mL solution |
| 4) From ______ and subsequently  
____ 100-mg capsule(s)  
____ times a day  
____ mL of 80-mg/mL solution |

Ritonavir should preferably be taken with food.

To reduce the occurrence of side effects, the dose of ritonavir should be increased gradually.

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.

It is important to take ritonavir regularly, at the same time each day, and to keep to this schedule as closely as possible. Adherence to therapy will help 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.

Ritonavir oral solution

The oral solution must be shaken well before taking the recommended amount.

The oral solution can be taken alone or mixed with 240 mL (1 cup) of Ensure®, Advera®, chocolate milk, chocolate or vanilla pudding, or ice cream to improve the taste. Ritonavir must be consumed within 60 minutes of being mixed. The taste of ritonavir can also be improved by swallowing a spoonful of peanut butter before taking it.
Other suggestions include taking ritonavir with molasses, honey, table syrup, maple syrup, chocolate syrup, mint ice cream, V8 Splash® or coffee, or eating chips after your dose.

It is also best not to mix ritonavir with too much liquid and to use a straw to drink it. Chewing gum after your dose can also help to disguise the taste.

### 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 drug?

Gastrointestinal effects, such as nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain and loss of appetite, are the most frequent side effects of ritonavir.

Taking ritonavir with food and gradually increasing the dose will help lessen these side effects.

If these effects occur and persist, consult your pharmacist, your doctor or your dietician. They can help you find ways to better manage these side effects.

Side effects such as gastrointestinal effects, numbness and tingling around the mouth in the hour after taking ritonavir (peribuccal paresthesia), increased sensitivity to touch, dizziness and a feeling of being drugged, generally disappear after the first four weeks of treatment.

In rare cases, ritonavir causes peripheral neuropathy: numbness, burning sensation, pain or weakness in the hands or feet. This effect is very likely reversible if you contact your doctor without delay.

Ritonavir may cause a change in taste. If you have a bad or bitter taste in your mouth, use chewing gum or hard candy (both sugar-free).

Adverse effects related to antiretroviral therapy have recently been reported, such as diabetes, elevated cholesterol and triglyceride concentrations (blood fat levels), ingrowing toenails, dry skin, an 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.

Ritonavir sometimes causes a rash, generally at the beginning of treatment. Some cases are mild, and your doctor can treat them with an anti-inflammatory (Motrin®, Advil®, etc.) or an antihistamine (cream). In some cases, however, the treatment must be discontinued.

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

If you get a rash, contact your doctor immediately.

Other effects that may occur with ritonavir are fatigue, headache, muscle aches and an increase in liver enzymes.

Inform your doctor or pharmacist of any troublesome side effects.

### Can I take ritonavir with my other medications?

- **Oral contraceptives ("the pill")**
  Ritonavir can decrease the efficacy of oral contraceptives. Additional protective measures, such as latex condoms, are recommended.

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

Ritonavir may interact with other medication or street drugs (Valium®, Demerol®, "Ecstasy", etc.).
Can I drink alcohol if I’m on ritonavir?

Avoid excessive or regular consumption of alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor); alcohol can increase the risk of hepatitis (inflammation of the liver) or interact with your medication.

Unless otherwise indicated by your physician, a moderate alcohol consumption (social drinking) should not affect your health. Do not skip a dose of your medication because you want a drink.

What if I’m pregnant or breast-feeding?

The effect of ritonavir in pregnant women is not yet known. If you are pregnant and you want to take ritonavir, discuss it with your doctor.

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

Storage

The capsules of ritonavir should be kept in the refrigerator (2 to 8°C or 36 to 46°F). They can also be kept at room temperature (less than 25°C or 77°F) for no more than 30 days.

The ritonavir oral solution must be kept at room temperature (15-25°C or 59-77°F).

Keep out of sight and reach of children.