How does this medication work?

Zidovudine, or AZT, is an antiretroviral drug that acts by preventing multiplication of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Zidovudine is a nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor; it inhibits reverse transcriptase action when the virus enters the host cell. The virus needs reverse transcriptase to multiply in the body.

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

Zidovudine 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>Zidovudine</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• _____ 100-mg capsule(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or _____ 300-mg tablet(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or _____ mL of 10-mg/mL syrup</td>
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<tr>
<td>• _____ times a day</td>
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Zidovudine may be taken with or without food.

It is recommended that zidovudine capsules and tablets be taken with a large glass of water to prevent irritation of the esophagus.

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 zidovudine 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 doctor.

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?

When starting your treatment, you may feel some discomfort, including nausea, headache, muscle aches, insomnia, fatigue or weakness. These side effects tend to disappear over time. Acetaminophen (Tylenol®, Atasol®) or an anti-inflammatory agent (Motrin®, Advil®, etc.) may be used to relieve headache or muscle aches.

Gastrointestinal effects such as nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain may occur. Take zidovudine with food to decrease them. If these effects persist, consult your pharmacist, your doctor or your dietician. They can help you find ways to better manage these side effects.

Zidovudine may sometimes have an effect on your blood and cause anemia, neutropenia, etc.

Anemia is a decrease in the number of red blood cells. Symptoms of anemia include shortness of breath, fatigue or unusual weakness, loss of appetite and pallor. Contact your doctor if these symptoms appear.

Neutropenia is a decrease in the number of white blood cells, a blood component required to combat infection.

Your doctor will monitor your blood components by taking regular blood tests.

Zidovudine can also cause nail discoloration.

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.

Zidovudine may be responsible for a side effect known as lactic acidosis (an increase in lactate levels in the blood). Your doctor will check for this side effect by taking regular blood samples. If you experience nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, weight loss, great fatigue, or find you have difficulty in breathing, contact your doctor without delay. These symptoms usually have no serious consequences, but might indicate the onset of lactic acidosis, which is more serious.

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

Can I take zidovudine with my other medications?

Some drugs may increase blood-component side effects if taken with zidovudine.

Consult your doctor or pharmacist before taking any new prescription or non-prescription medication, natural product or recreational drug.

Can I drink alcohol if I’m on zidovudine?

Avoid excessive or regular consumption of alcohol (beer, wine or hard liquor); alcohol may interact with some of your medications.

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 breast-feeding?

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

Keep zidovudine capsules and tablets in a dry, dark place at room temperature (15-25°C or 59-77°F). Avoid humidity (bathrooms, etc.).

Keep zidovudine oral solution in a dark place at room temperature (15-25°C or 59-77°F).

Keep 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: ______________________