



# Drug Information

## COMBIVIR (AZT+ 3TC)

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### Why am I given COMBIVIR as my medication?

- COMBIVIR is a combination of two antiretroviral drugs, lamivudine (3TC, Epivir) and zidovudine (AZT, Retrovir). It is used together with other medications to treat HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection.
- COMBIVIR blocks a protein called “Reverse Transcriptase”, as a result, it belongs to a class of drugs called Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors (RTI). The HIV virus needs this protein to reproduce itself, so by blocking it the drug helps slow down HIV disease.
- Taking this medication can reduce the amount of virus in your body. It can also reduce your chance of getting sick from AIDS related illnesses, help you stay healthy longer or get your health back. It may also reduce the damage to your immune system.

### How do I take this medication?

- Each COMBIVIR tablet contains 300 mg of AZT and 150 mg of 3TC. The usual dose is 1 tablet twice daily. COMBIVIR can be taken with or without food.
- COMBIVIR should be stored at room temperature in a dry place. Don't put the medicine in the bathroom or kitchen, as moisture may cause the medicine to lose its effectiveness.
- Keep it out of reach of children.

### What if I forget to take a dose?

- Take the dose you missed as soon as possible. However, if it is within 2 hours of your next dose, just continue with your regular schedule. Do not double the dose.
- Recent studies have found that for the anti-HIV medications to work, all the medications need to be taken regularly and consistently. Missing or skipping doses of your medication may make it lose its effectiveness as the virus can change itself and become resistant to the medication.

### What are the side effects of COMBIVIR?

- The common side effects of COMBIVIR may include:
  - headaches
  - stomach upsets, diarrhea
  - fever
  - fatigue
  - color changes in your finger nails
- If the effects happen and bother you, call your doctor or pharmacist to discuss your symptoms with them.
- Do not stop the medication or change your dose before you talk to your doctor or pharmacist. They may have suggestions of how you can manage the side effects without stopping the medication.



- Rarely, COMBIVIR may cause a decrease in your white blood cells (which can increase risk for bacterial infection), and/or red blood cells (which can make you feel tired and short of breath).

### **Can I take COMBIVIR with other medications?**

- COMBIVIR can interact with other drugs. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the prescription and non-prescription medications (including vitamins and herbs) that you are taking.

### **Can I take COMBIVIR with alcohol or street drugs?**

- In general, it is advisable to avoid excessive amount of alcohol and street drugs while you are taking anti-HIV medications. Alcohol may interact with some of your medications. Do not skip a dose of your medication because you want a drink.

### **Can I take COMBIVIR if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?**

- If you are pregnant and wish to take COMBIVIR, please consult your doctor about taking medication.
- Since the HIV virus can be transmitted through breast milk, breast-feeding is not recommended in HIV positive women.

### **What other precautions do I need to know when taking COMBIVIR?**

- You should keep your appointments with your physician for blood tests to check your liver and kidney function regularly.
- Make sure you have a continuous supply of the medication.
- COMBIVIR does not kill the virus or cure AIDS. It also does not prevent the transmission of HIV, so please remember to always take precautions if you are having sex (use latex condoms) or using drugs (use clean syringes).

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