



Zerit® [Zair-it] (stavudine)



There are five classes of HIV medications (meds). They will not prevent or cure HIV. They limit how the virus makes copies of itself in your body. Zerit is in the class of meds called *nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors* (NRTIs or Nukes).

A generic version of this drug is available.

Who Should Take Zerit?

- Any person, even newborns, can take Zerit
- Pregnant women face a higher risk of fatal lactic acidosis. This is a build up of lactate in the blood. Their doctors should decide if Zerit is the right drug for them.
- Before you start Zerit, tell your doctor if you have:
 - Liver or kidney problems
 - Hands or feet that hurt, tingle or are numb
 - Gallstones

How Is Zerit Taken?

Zerit is a pill that is taken every 12 hours. It should be taken with water. It can be taken with or without food.

Side Effects

It is common to have side effects when you start HIV treatment. Make sure your doctor knows about any allergies and side effects you have had to other meds. Your doctor may change the type and/or amount of your meds.

What are the common side effects of Zerit?

- Headache
- Sick to your stomach, loose stools or throw up
- Change in how the body stores fat
- Skin rash

What are the severe and rare side effects of Zerit?

- Liver damage. Signs include: sick to your stomach, stomach pain, low fever, not hungry, dark urine, clay-colored stools and yellow skin or eyes.
- Lactic acidosis. This is a build up of lactate in the blood.
- Pancreas damage. Signs include: sick to your stomach, throw up, loose stool and belly pain.
- Nerve damage. Signs include: feet, legs, arms or hands burn are numb or tingle. The nerve damage often goes away if Zerit is stopped or a lower dose is given. The damage may last if a person takes Zerit after the symptoms begin.

Take your HIV treatment just how your doctor tells you. Do not miss any doses, even if you feel well. When the meds are in your body, they will help stop the HIV.

Bring all of your meds and any supplements to your doctor visits. A "Brown Bag Check-up" can also help your doctor keep your records up to date and help you get better quality care.

Some people are allergic to Zerit. See a doctor right away if you have any of these signs:

- Feel very tired
- Fast breath or shortness of breath
- Sudden weight loss
- Stomach pain
- Throw up
- Feel weak in the arms or legs

Always talk to your doctor before you stop any treatment they prescribe for you.

How Does Zerit Mix with Other Meds?

You and your doctor should know all the kinds of meds that you take. When you take two or more meds it can cause a bad *interaction*. This means that the meds do not mix well. This can lead to harmful side effects and hurt your treatment.



Talk to your doctor if you take these meds or meds to treat:

- HIV -Videx® (didanosine or ddl) or Norvir® (ritonavir)
- Hepatitis C
- Cancers, leukemia and sickle cell anemia
- Heroin withdrawal
- Viral pneumonia
- Bacterial infections

Do not drink alcohol with Zerit.

For more information

Contact your Registered Nurse Care Manager, or call PHP Nurse Advice Line at: (800) 797-1717.

Visit the Medication Guide on the FDA website at: <http://www.fda.gov>

