Ziagen® [ZY-uh-jen] (abacavir)

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. Ziagen is in the class of meds called *nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors* (NRTIs or Nukes).

Who Should Take Ziagen?

Any person three months of age or older can use Ziagen.

Pregnant women and heavy drinkers should talk to their doctors before they start Ziagen.

How Is Ziagen Taken?

Ziagen is taken as a pill or liquid once or twice a day.

Ziagen may 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 Ziagen?

- Bad dreams or sleep problems
- Stomach pain
- Throw up
- Feel very tired
- Headache
- Fever and chills
- Rash

What are the severe and rare side effects of Ziagen?

- Severe rash and skin reactions. This most often happens in the first 6 weeks of treatment. Stop Ziagen if you get a severe rash.
- Fever
- Liver damage. Signs include: easy to bruise or bleed, not hungry, pain in the upper right part of the belly, yellow skin or eyes, sick to your stomach and fatigue that does not go away.
- Lactic acidosis. This is a build up of lactate in the blood.
- Changes in how the body stores fat
- High blood sugar and diabetes

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

Take your HIV treatment just how your doctor tells you. Do not miss any doses, even if you feel well. When the meds are n 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.

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Note: People who take Ziagen are given a card that has all the signs of an allergic reaction. This card should be carried at all times. Allergic reactions can cause death, so call your doctor right away.

How Does Ziagen 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.

- Do not drink alcohol with Ziagen
- Methadone can change the levels of Ziagen in your body.

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

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