**ATAZANAVIR (Reyataz®) & RITONAVIR (Norvir®)**

**What is Atazanavir?**
- A protease inhibitor (PI), which inhibits the replication of the HIV virus in combination with other antiretroviral agents (ARV).
- Available as 150 mg or 300 mg hard gel capsules

**What is Ritonavir?**
- A protease inhibitor used to inhibit the replication of the HIV virus in combination with other antiretroviral agents or to increase blood levels of other protease inhibitors.
- Available as 100 mg tablet or a 100 mg soft gel capsules and a 80 mg/mL liquid

**Why am I taking these two protease inhibitors?**
When atazanavir and ritonavir are taken together, ritonavir will "boost" the level of atazanavir and increase its effect.

**How do I take these?**
- The usual adult dose is atazanavir 300 mg (1 x 300 mg capsule OR 2 x 150 mg capsules) once daily, with ritonavir 100 mg (1 tablet or capsule) once daily.
- Take atazanavir and ritonavir at the same time. Take only as prescribed by your doctor.
- The medication should be taken with food (i.e. a light meal) to increase absorption.
- Swallow the capsules or tablets whole (do NOT chew).
- Atazanavir absorption can be significantly lowered by medications that decrease stomach acidity (e.g. ranitidine (Zantac®), cimetidine (Tagamet®), famotidine (Pepcid®), omeprazole (Losec®), pantoprazole (Pantoloc®)). Talk to your pharmacist or doctor, if you are taking these medications. Antacids or antacid containing products may be used but must be taken at least 1 hr before or 2 hrs after your dose of atazanavir.
- Alcohol is not recommended in the first 4 weeks of therapy and should be used with caution thereafter.

**What should I expect?**

**ATAZANAVIR:**
- Common side effects may include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and headache. These effects may diminish within the first month of treatment. You may also experience some fatigue, dizziness, weakness, body ache or rash/allergy. Contact your doctor or pharmacist if any side effects occur and remain persistent.

- Atazanavir will cause an increase in your bilirubin levels that usually does not cause symptoms or affect liver function. However, contact your doctor, if you experience persistent abdominal pain and/or have signs of jaundice (e.g. yellowing of the skin or whites of your eyes).
• Atazanavir has not been shown to increase blood fat levels (LDL cholesterol, triglyceride) to the same degree as some of the other currently available protease inhibitors.

• In studies, some Atazanavir patients experienced a change in their heart rhythm (ECG), which did not cause symptoms. However caution should be taken if you have a history of abnormal heart rhythm or are taking other medications that may alter heart rhythm, such as certain anti-histamines, anti-fungals, macrolide antibiotics and anti-arrhythmic heart medications.

RITONAVIR:

• Common side effects include nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, anorexia, abdominal pain, taste disturbances and abnormal sensations in the hands, feet or in and around the mouth.

• Other effects may include headache, muscle weakness, fever, lightheadedness, insomnia and/or sweating

Redistribution or accumulation of body fat, blood fat changes and/or diabetes may occur in patients receiving antiretroviral therapy. Your doctor or pharmacist can provide you with further information on this topic.

WARNING:

Protease inhibitors not only interact with each other, but may alter the level of other medications. Always check with the pharmacist (1-888-511-6222) or your doctor before starting any new therapies (prescription, non-prescription and herbal) to ensure the safety of the combination. This is important, as in some cases the combination may result in serious and/or life-threatening complications.

Medications that may require dosage adjustment or an alternative treatment, include:

  Some anti-histamines, sedatives, anti-tuberculosis medications, anti-fungal medications, narcotic analgesics, methadone, heart/blood-pressure medications, psychiatric medications, anti-convulsants, transplant/immunosuppressant medications, warfarin, cholesterol lowering agents, sildenafil (Viagra®), oral contraceptives (birth control pill), ergot containing migraine medications.

Avoid the following Herbal/Natural remedies: St. John’s Wort, Milk Thistle, Garlic, as these may decrease levels of protease inhibitors.

How do I store these?

• Atazanavir capsules should be stored in a dry place at room temperature (15-30 degrees C).

• Ritonavir capsules should be stored in the refrigerator (2-8 degrees C), but are stable at room temperature (less than 25 degrees C) for thirty days. Keep ritonavir capsules away from excessive heat and protected from light.

• Ritonavir tablets and liquid should NOT be stored in the refrigerator. Store at room temperature (2-25 degrees C) in its original container, tightly sealed, away from excessive heat and protected from light.

• All medication should be stored out of the reach of children.

Labwork to be done:

CBC with differential, liver enzymes, conjugated and total bilirubin, fasting glucose and lipid panel, plasma viral load, CD4 count

January 2011