



Antivirals Medication Information

Why would I have to take antivirals post-transplant?

After your transplant you are at a higher risk of developing infections. This is because the drugs we give you to prevent rejection also prevent your body from being able to fight off some infections. We give you antiviral medications to prevent the development of common viral infections posttransplant.

What antivirals will I have to take after my transplant?

The antiviral medication that you will have to take after your transplant is called Valcyte® (valganciclovir). If you develop a viral infection after your transplant you may have to receive the IV formulation of this drug called ganciclovir for a few weeks. In addition to Valcyte® there is another antiviral called Valtrex® (valacyclovir) that may be used for viral infections posttransplant. Valtrex® is used to treat viral infections such as shingles or genital or oral herpes.

What are antivirals used for?

Antivirals are used to prevent common viral infections that occur posttransplant. CMV or cytomegalovirus is a common viral infection that occurs posttransplant. Most people already have been exposed to this virus and have antibodies against it, however, the immunosuppressive medications that you are taking decrease your body's ability to fight this infection on its own. CMV infections can occur in the lungs, liver, eyes, or the intestine. It is important to let your doctor know if you are having increased nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Though these are common side effects of your immunosuppressive medications they can also be signs of a viral infection. Valcyte® can also prevent reactivation of HSV or herpes infections. If you develop a herpes infection after you stop your Valcyte® you may be given a different antiviral called Valtrex® to treat the infection.

How long will I have to take antivirals?

You will have to take Valcyte® once a day for a total of 3-6 months after your transplant. If you have already been exposed to CMV in the past and have antibodies to the virus you will only have to take Valcyte® for 3 months. If you do not have antibodies to the virus but your donor does you will have to take Valcyte® for 6 months.

Do antivirals interact with any other drugs?

No, antivirals do not affect the levels of other drugs. When used in combination with Cellcept® or Rapamune® they can lower your white blood cell count. This is something your doctors will monitor.

Are there side effects to the antivirals?

All of the antivirals can cause some nausea, vomiting and diarrhea as well as headache and difficulty sleeping.

Please direct your medication questions to
your transplant coordinator or transplant pharmacist.