

Brand Name: Valcyte
Common Name: Valganciclovir



What is Valganciclovir?

Valganciclovir is an anti-viral drug used to prevent and treat infections caused by a virus called cytomegalovirus (CMV). CMV is a common virus that is spread through body fluids and can infect anyone. Before transplant, CMV infections are usually mild and once a person is infected, they carry the virus for life.

After transplant, your immune system is lowered, putting you at increased risk becoming infected with CMV or having the virus reactivate in your body. CMV infections can cause serious health problems, including issues with your transplanted organ. Valganciclovir is not a cure for CMV. It works by slowing the growth of the virus and limits the spread to other areas of the body.

How should Valganciclovir be taken?

The dosage and length of treatment is based on your medical conditions, kidney function, type of transplant you have received, and if you or your donor had a previous CMV infection. Typically, patients will take one (450mg) to two tablets (900mg) once a day for up to 6 months.

Take this medication by mouth with food. Swallow the tablets whole. Do not crush, chew, or break the tablets. You should try to take this medication at the same time every day.

If you miss a dose:

If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is close to your next scheduled dose, skip the missed dose and take your next dose as scheduled. NEVER double the dose.

It is important to remember to take this medication regularly and on time so that it can work most effectively for you. Missing too many doses can put you at increased risk of infection.

If you are sick:

If you vomit within 30 minutes of taking Valganciclovir you should take it again. If you vomit more than 30 minutes after taking your dose, it is not necessary to take another dose. If you have diarrhea for several days or continue to vomit, you should contact your transplant team.

What are the side effects?

- Nausea
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Fever
- Stomach discomfort
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Tremors
- Difficulty sleeping or feeling tired
- Tingling in hands and feet

Valganciclovir may cause some types of blood cells to decrease or may cause your kidney function to worsen. You will be monitored regularly for these changes, so it is important to keep all of your blood work appointments.

If you have any major changes to your vision when taking valganciclovir, call your doctor right away.

How should Valganciclovir be handled?

Valganciclovir should be handled very carefully.

- Wash your hands well after handling.
- Never crush, break or chew your tablets.
- If you touch a crushed or broken tablet, wash your hands well.
- If this medication gets in your eyes, rinse them thoroughly with plain water.

There are no major concerns for your family although it is important for your family to be careful if they ever come in contact with your urine.

- If urine has spilled anywhere, clean it up right away.
- Close the toilet seat before flushing.
- If you have soiled any clothes or bed sheets with your urine, handle them with care – your family should wear gloves.

Medications should not be flushed down the toilet or thrown away in the trash. Return any unused medication to a pharmacy for disposal.

How should Valganciclovir be stored?

Keep your medications away from extremes of temperature (very hot or very cold). Keep them at room temperature, away from children. Do not keep medication in your vehicle. When you travel, take your medication in a carry-on bag and keep it with you at all times.

Drug interactions

It is important to check with your doctor or pharmacist before you take any new medications, even products you buy off the shelf, to make sure it will not interact with Valganciclovir.

Other information

Precautions should be taken to avoid pregnancy while on this medication. Talk to your transplant team before trying to get pregnant as this drug can cause harm to an unborn baby.

Have more questions

Do not hesitate to talk your pharmacist. Regular virtual education classes are available. You can contact the transplant pharmacist or register for a class through email: transplantmeds@lhsc.on.ca

