

## DRUG INFORMATION SHEET RITONAVIR (Norvir®)

### ABOUT THIS DRUG

#### What is RITONAVIR?

RITONAVIR is an antiretroviral agent (anti-HIV) which belongs to a class of drugs called “protease inhibitors” or “PIs.” RITONAVIR interferes with the enzyme responsible for cutting viral proteins needed to make HIV infectious particles. RITONAVIR is often used in lower dosages to help enhance the effect of other protease inhibitors. When given in higher doses combined with other antiretroviral agents, RITONAVIR can achieve a significant decrease in viral multiplication.

#### What is the Goal of this Drug?

The goal is to decrease the amount of viruses in the blood (viral load) to as LOW as possible for as LONG as possible. Maximal suppression of viral replication allows the immune system the best chance to recover.

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### How Should I Take this Drug?

- To Boost Other Protease Inhibitors: Most often, RITONAVIR is used in lower dosages (100-400 mg per day) to help enhance the effect of other protease inhibitors. Examples include TIPRANAVIR, INDINAVIR, ATAZANAVIR, FOSAMPRENAVIR, and SAQUINAVIR. KALETRA® tablets contains LOPINAVIR and RITONAVIR.
- Treatment Dose: RITONAVIR taken in higher dosages (800-1200 mg per day).
- RITONAVIR is available in Canada in two dosage forms: Norvir® 100 mg capsules and Norvir® 80 mg/mL liquid.
- Follow the instructions on your prescription label. Ask the Pharmacist for more information.

**IMPORTANT:** It is **extremely important** that you take the medication **as prescribed** by your doctor (i.e. Do not miss doses, do not take smaller doses, do not run out of medication and do not stop taking medication or take “drug holidays”). Missing doses can make RITONAVIR less effective, and may also make the virus resistant to RITONAVIR and to other protease inhibitors.

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### What if I Miss a dose?

- **Missed dose within 4 hours from your usual time:** Take it as soon as you remember.
- **Missed dose after 4 hours from your usual time or close to the time of the next dose:** Skip the missed dose and take your next dose as scheduled; do not double the dose.
- If you find it difficult to remember your dose times, inform your pharmacist, some patients find devices such as dosettes, timers/beepers and medication schedules useful.

### What are the Possible Side Effects?

#### **Diarrhea (13-18%)**

Ensure you stay well hydrated with fluids. Medications used to help manage diarrhea include:

- Over the Counter (OTC): available at your local pharmacy. Ask the pharmacist if you have any questions.
  - Loperamide (Imodium<sup>®</sup>) may be taken for a brief period (maximum 8 tablets per day).
  - Calcium supplements: take 500 mg twice daily.
  - Psyllium (Metamucil<sup>®</sup>, Prodiem<sup>®</sup>) use daily.
- By prescription only: Ask your doctor for a prescription.
  - Ultrase<sup>®</sup> (pancreatic enzymes): 1 capsule twice daily.

#### **Other Possible Side Effects**

- Headache
- Mild nausea
- Dry mouth, tingling or numbness of mouth and lips
- Bitter aftertaste
- Abdominal pain
- Upset stomach
- Vomiting
- Rash
- Lack of energy

*Side effects lessen, and will generally go away after a few weeks of therapy. Please contact the clinic pharmacist if these side effects feel serious, and/or prevent you from taking the medication.*

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### Can I take Other Medications with this Drug?

There are MANY potentially serious drug interactions with RITONAVIR. Please consult the pharmacist for the safety of using RITONAVIR along with other prescription, non-prescription, herbal or recreational drugs. Some common drug interactions with RITONAVIR to watch for include:

#### **AVOID**

- Amiodarone (Cordarone<sup>®</sup>), bepridil, flecainide (Tambacor<sup>®</sup>), propafenone (Rythmol<sup>®</sup>), quinidine
- Astemizole (Hismanal<sup>®</sup> – no longer marketed in Canada), terfenadine (Seldane<sup>®</sup> – no longer marketed in Canada)
- Ergot derivatives such as dihydroergotamine (DHE<sup>®</sup>, Migranal<sup>®</sup>), ergotamine (Bellergal<sup>®</sup>, Cafergot<sup>®</sup>, Ergodryl<sup>®</sup>, Gravergol<sup>®</sup>), ergonovine, methylergonovine
- Cisapride (Prepulsid<sup>®</sup> – no longer marketed in Canada)
- Simvastatin (Zocor<sup>®</sup>), Lovastatin (Mevacor<sup>®</sup>)
- St.John's Wort (Hypericum perforatum)
- Triazolam (Halcion<sup>®</sup>), midazolam (Versed<sup>®</sup>)
- Pimozide (Orap<sup>®</sup>)
- Garlic
- Rifampin (Rifadin<sup>®</sup>, Rofact<sup>®</sup>, Rifater<sup>®</sup>), rifabutin (Mycobutin<sup>®</sup>)
- Meperidine (Demerol<sup>®</sup>)
- Metronidazole (Flagyl<sup>®</sup>), disulfiram (Antabuse<sup>®</sup>)
- Warfarin (Coumadin<sup>®</sup>)
- Sildenafil (Viagra<sup>®</sup>)
- Desipramine (Norpramin<sup>®</sup>)
- Ketoconazole (Nizoral<sup>®</sup>)
- Clarithromycin (Biaxin<sup>®</sup>)
- Oral contraceptives
- Theophylline
- Methadone

*Please inform your doctor and/or pharmacist about new medications you are taking, or medications that you are interested in taking, to ensure that the effectiveness of your antiretroviral treatment with RITONAVIR is maintained.*

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### Are there Times I Should NOT Take this Drug?

Certain conditions may affect whether you should take, or continue taking RITONAVIR. Tell your doctor immediately if:

- You are allergic to this medicine.
- You are pregnant or become pregnant while taking RITONAVIR.
- You are breastfeeding or want to breastfeed while taking RITONAVIR.

### How Should I Store this Drug?

- Norvir<sup>®</sup> Capsules
  - This medication is refrigerated (2-8°C) at the clinic and it is recommended that patients also store in the refrigerator. However, the capsules can be stored at room temperature (25°C) for 30 days.
  - Protect from light and excessive heat.
- Norvir<sup>®</sup> Liquid
  - Do not refrigerate liquid. Store at room temperature between 20-25°C.
  - Shake well before use.
  - Protect from excessive heat.
- Keep out of reach of children.
- Return medications no longer needed to the SAC pharmacy.

OTHER

### Questions & Refills

For questions about your medications or to refill your prescription, contact the pharmacist at SAC at (403) 955-6388. \*\*\*24-hour notice is appreciated for refills\*\*\*