



HIV Drug Information



Saquinavir (Invirase, Fortovase)

Why am I given Saquinavir as my medication?

- ☛ Saquinavir (Invirase, Fortovase) is a drug used in combination with other medications to treat HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection.
- ☛ Saquinavir blocks a protein called "protease." It belongs to a class of drugs called protease inhibitors (PIs). The HIV virus needs this protein to reproduce itself, so by blocking it the drug helps slow down HIV disease.
- ☛ Taking this medication can reduce the amount of virus in your body. It can also reduce your chance of getting sick from AIDS-related illnesses, help you stay healthy longer or get your health back. It may also reduce the damage to your immune system.

How do I take this medication?

- ☛ Saquinavir comes in 2 different forms: Invirase, which is a 200 mg green and yellow capsule; and Fortovase, which is a 200 mg beige soft-gel capsule
- ☛ The number of pills you need to take depends on which form of the drug you are taking. Both Invirase and Fortovase should be taken with food or within two hours after a meal.
- ☛ Swallow the capsules whole, do not chew or crush them.



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Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV-related illness and the treatments in question.

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- ☛ These days, saquinavir is mostly used in combination with another protease inhibitor, such as ritonavir (Norvir).
- ☛ Don't put the medicine in the bathroom or kitchen, as moisture may cause it to lose its effectiveness.
- ☛ Invirase capsules should be kept at room temperature in a dry place.
- ☛ Fortovase capsules may be stored at room temperature for up to 3 months.
- ☛ Keep it out of reach of children.

What if I forget to take a dose?

- ☛ Take the dose you missed as soon as possible. However, if it is within 2 hours of your next dose, just continue with your regular schedule. Do not double the dose.
- ☛ Recent studies have found that for the anti-HIV medications to work, all the medications need to be taken regularly and consistently. Missing or skipping doses of your medication may make it lose its effectiveness, as the virus can change itself and become resistant to the medication.

What are the side effects of Saquinavir?

- ☛ Common side effects of Saquinavir may include:
 - stomach upset and nausea
 - gas and diarrhea
 - rash
 - headache
 - fatigue
- ☛ Longer-term side effects of Saquinavir may include:
 - an increase in the sugar and fat (cholesterol, triglyceride) levels in your blood
 - abnormal body fat distribution (increase in waist and breast size and thinning of the arms and legs and face)

Consult your doctor or pharmacist if you have these side effects. Do not stop the medication or change the dose before you talk with them.



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Can I take Saquinavir with other medications?

- ☛ Saquinavir can interact with other drugs. It is important to tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the prescription and non-prescription medications (including vitamins and herbs) you are taking.
- ☛ Saquinavir should not be taken with:
 - Hismanal (astemizole)
 - Seldane (terfenadine)
 - Prepulse (cisapride)
 - rifampin
 - rifabutin

Can I take Saquinavir with alcohol or street drugs?

- ☛ It is advisable to avoid excessive amounts of alcohol while you are taking Saquinavir. Alcohol may interact with your medications and increase the risk of liver damage. Do not skip a dose of your medication because you want a drink.
- ☛ Saquinavir may also interact with street drugs. Consult your doctor or pharmacist if you are using street drugs so they can advise you about the necessary precautions.

Can I take Saquinavir if I am pregnant or breast-feeding?

- ☛ If you are pregnant and wish to take Saquinavir, consult your doctor.
- ☛ Since the HIV virus can be transmitted through breast milk, breast-feeding is not recommended for HIV positive women.

What other precautions do I need to know when taking Saquinavir?

- ☛ Keep your appointments with your physician for blood tests to check your liver, pancreas and kidney function, blood sugar, and cholesterol and triglyceride levels regularly.
- ☛ Make sure you have a continuous supply of the medication.



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- ☛ Saquinavir does not kill the virus or cure AIDS. It also does not prevent the transmission of HIV, so remember to always take precautions if you are having sex (use latex condoms) or using drugs (use clean syringes).

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