



## HIV Drug Information



ddC (Zalcitabine, Hivid)

### Why am I given ddC as my medication?

- ddC (also called zalcitabine, Hivid) is a drug that is used in combination with other drugs to treat HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection.
- ddC blocks a protein called "reverse transcriptase." As a result, it belongs to a class of drugs called Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors (RTIs). The HIV virus needs this protein to reproduce itself, so by blocking it the drug helps to 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?

- ddC comes in 0.375 mg and 0.75 mg tablets.
- The usual dose of ddC is 0.75 mg every 8 hours.
- ddC can be taken with or without food.



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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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- ☛ ddC should be stored at room temperature in a dry place. Don't put the medicine in the bathroom or kitchen, as moisture may cause the medicine to lose its effectiveness.
- ☛ 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 ddC?**

- ☛ The most serious side effects of ddC are:
  - peripheral neuropathy (numbness, burning, tingling sensation, pain or weakness in the hands and feet)
  - pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas). Symptoms can include sharp abdominal pain that goes through to your back, as well as nausea and vomiting.

If this happens, call your doctor right away. These symptoms are usually reversible if recognized early and the medication discontinued or reduced.

- ☛ Other side effects of ddC can include:
  - mouth ulcers, dry mouth
  - headache, insomnia, dizziness
  - skin rash, itching
  - nausea and vomiting
  - muscle pain



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- ☛ In rare cases, ddC may cause a decrease in your white blood cells (which can increase the risk for bacterial infection), platelets (which can increase the risk for bleeding) and red blood cells (which can cause tiredness and shortness of breath).
- ☛ ddC may also cause abnormalities in your blood sugar or liver function tests.
- ☛ These side effects are reversible if they are recognized quickly and the drug is discontinued or reduced. If you feel these symptoms, talk to your doctor or pharmacist immediately. Do not stop the medication or change your dose before you talk to them.

### **Can I take ddC with other medications?**

- ☛ ddC can interact with other drugs. It is important that you tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the prescription and non-prescription medications (including vitamins and herbs) that you are taking.
- ☛ Do not take ddC with ddl (didanosine, Videx) and maybe d4T as well (stavudine, Zerit); all three "d" drugs increase the risk of neuropathy and pancreatitis.
- ☛ Other drugs commonly used in HIV that may interact with ddC include:
  - amphotericin B
  - dapsone
  - foscarnet
  - pentamidine

### **Can I take ddC with alcohol or street drugs?**

- ☛ Avoid alcohol if you are on ddC. Alcohol may increase your risk for pancreatitis (swollen pancreas gland).
- ☛ ddC may also interact with street drugs. Consult your doctor and pharmacist if you are using street drugs so they can advise you about the necessary precautions.

### **Can I take ddC if I am pregnant or breast-feeding?**

- ☛ If you are pregnant and wish to take ddC, please consult your doctor about taking medication.



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- ☛ Since the HIV virus can be transmitted through breast milk, breast-feeding is not recommended in HIV positive women.

### What other precautions do I need to know when taking ddC?

- ☛ If you have liver or kidney problems, make sure your doctor knows that before starting you on ddC. Keep your appointments with your physician for blood tests to check your liver and kidney function regularly.
- ☛ Make sure you have a continuous supply of the medication.
- ☛ ddC does not kill the virus or cure AIDS. It also does not prevent the transmission of HIV, so please remember to always take precautions if you are having sex (use latex condoms) or using drugs (use clean syringes).

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This information is also available in Chinese, Tagalog and Vietnamese

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