

VALGANCICLOVIR

Other names: Valcyte®



Important note: The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

Why are you taking valganciclovir?

Valganciclovir is used to treat CMV (cytomegalovirus) infection, which can cause sight impairment. Valganciclovir prevents the virus from growing and reproducing in the body. Most people have been infected with CMV but the virus does not usually cause any problems. However, CMV can cause problems in people who have an immune system that is weakened, for example in people with organ transplants or AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

Before you take this medicine

Valganciclovir may cause birth defects. It is **extremely important** that both men and women of childbearing age use adequate contraception while taking valganciclovir, and to continue to use contraception for 90 days after treatment has finished. Talk to your doctor if you are unsure about which contraception to use.

Tell your doctor if you have had an allergic reaction to valganciclovir or any other antivirals (for example aciclovir/Zovirax) in the past.

When to take this medicine

Take your medicine exactly as prescribed by your doctor, usually once or twice a day. Taking too much or too little can cause serious problems.

Swallow the tablets whole. Do not break or crush them, and take them with some water. Valganciclovir is best taken with food, but if you are unwell and cannot eat you should still take your medicine at your usual times. Take the tablets about the same time each day. If you are not sure how to take your medicine ask your doctor or pharmacist.

DO NOT STOP taking this medicine without your doctor's permission.

If you miss a dose

If you miss a dose of this medicine take it as soon as possible except when it is close to the time of your next dose. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular dosing schedule. You should not take two doses at the same time.

Side Effects

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

Call your doctor **immediately** if you have any of these side effects:

- any signs of an infection e.g. sore throat, fever, chills, cough
- unusual or unexplained bleeding or bruising
- problem with your eyesight e.g. blurring, flashes of light or eye pain
- tingling, numbness or burning pain in the hands, arms, legs or feet
- unusual tiredness or weakness
- allergic reaction e.g. itching or hives, swelling of the face, hands, throat or shortness of breath
- pain when passing urine
- confusion, abnormal thoughts, agitation, hallucinations (seeing, hearing or feeling things that are not there)

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you have these side effects:

- diarrhoea, feeling sick (nausea), vomiting, loss of appetite, stomach pain
- headache
- unable to sleep (insomnia)
- skin rash, itchy skin
- dizziness or sedation
- shaking or tremors
- muscle cramps

This list of side effects is **not** complete. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if any of these side effects are of concern to you.

Valganciclovir can make some people drowsy, confused or light-headed. It is important to make sure you know how your body reacts before you drive a car, operate machinery or ride a bike.

Your doctor may ask you to have regular blood tests. Valganciclovir can occasionally affect certain blood cells. If your kidneys are not working properly your doctor may reduce the number of tablets for you to take.

Other Medicines

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other medicines including herbal or complementary products and medicines you can buy without a prescription.

Other medicines that can interfere with valganciclovir include:

- antibiotics e.g. trimethoprim, imipenem-cilastatin
- probenecid (can increase the blood level of valganciclovir)
- AIDS medicine e.g. zidovudine, didanosine

This is not a complete list, check with your doctor or pharmacist when prescribed other medicines.

Storage

Keep all medicines out of the reach of children.

Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist.