

**OAK TREE CLINIC
INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS/PARENTS**

DRUG NAME: SAQUINAVIR

BRAND NAME: Fortovase

THIS MEDICATION IS:

An antiviral drug that slows the growth of HIV, the virus associated with AIDS belong to a group of drugs called protease inhibitors. Protease inhibitors work by inhibiting the enzyme protease (also called proteinase) which is needed for HIV to multiply. Inhibiting this enzyme produces incomplete, noninfectious HIV particles. Other protease inhibitors are indinavir, nelfinavir and ritonavir and lopinavir/ritonavir. Saquinavir is always used in combination with other anti-HIV agents

BENEFITS OF SAQUINAVIR:

It reduces the amount of HIV virus (viral load) and increases the number of CD4 cells (T cells or immune cells) in the blood.
By reducing the amount of HIV virus it decreases the chance of death or infections that happen when the immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

AVAILABILITY OF SAQUINAVIR

Saquinavir is available as a 200 mg capsule.

HOW TO TAKE SAQUINAVIR:

The usual dose of saquinavir is 1200 mg (6 capsules) three times a day.
Saquinavir should be taken with food to help it work better.
Saquinavir should be started at the full dose. Do not interrupt therapy. Skipping doses or taking drug holidays can lead to the development of a virus resistant to saquinavir.

DOSING OF SAQUINAVIR

Your dose of SAQUINAVIR is _____ mg _____ times a day.

IF YOU MISS A DOSE:

Take the dose as soon as you remember that day.
If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and take the next dose at the regular time.
DO NOT double the dose.

PROBLEMS WHICH MAY BE ENCOUNTERED:

This list of side effects is NOT complete. If you have questions about side effects, please contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Check with your doctor IMMEDIATELY if any of the following side effects occur: nausea, vomiting or severe abdominal pain. These may be signs of pancreatitis.

The following side effects sometimes happen. Call the clinic pharmacist, nurse, or doctor if they continue or are very bothersome.

abnormal stools (bowel movements), diarrhea, feeling weak/tired, headache and nausea.
children may get a skin rash

The following side effects may occur and will be monitored by your doctor with regular blood tests:

It is important that the doctors visits be kept as scheduled so that the blood can be checked regularly, especially when the drug is first started.

Liver enzyme tests may become elevated.

Some patients have large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol.

Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) may occur. If you notice increased thirst, hunger and urination, contact your doctor as soon as possible.

Lipodystrophy:

- Some patients that have been on antiretroviral therapy for a long time (usually more than 6 months) notice changes in the location of their body fat - this is called lipodystrophy.
- Patients may notice a loss of fat in their face, arms or legs, while others notice increased fat in the stomach, neck or breast areas. Talk to your doctor if you notice these changes. These changes may not be reversible.

Increased bleeding episodes:

Patients with hemophilia may have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors. If you have hemophilia, make sure you report any increase in bleeding episodes to your doctor.

DRUGS WHICH CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS WHEN TAKEN WITH SAQUINAVIR:

There are many drugs that may interact with saquinavir. Please discuss **ALL** medications that you are currently taking with your doctor or pharmacist.

DO NOT take the following medications while you are on saquinavir. Serious or life threatening reactions may result when saquinavir is combined with these medications.

Dihydroergotaine, ergonovine, ergotamine and methylegonovine such as Cafegot, Migranal, D.H.E. 45, ergotrate maleate, methergine and others.	Propulsid (cisapride)
Halcion (triazolam) Versed (midazolam)	Seldane (terfenadine)
Hismanal (astemizole)	Rifampin

Special Considerations:

DO NOT combine these medications:

Drugs	Effect	Action
St. John ' s Wort (hypericum perforatum)	St. John ' s Wort may decrease saquinavir levels and make it less effective	Do not take with St. John ' s Wort
Lipid lowering agents: Mevacor (lovastatin), Zocor (simvastatin), Lipitor (atorvastatin) and Baycol (cerivastatin)	Lovastatin and simvastatin may cause serious reactions. Atorvastatin and cerivastatin have an increased risk of drug interactions.	Do not take with lovastatin or simvastatin.

Dosage adjustment is required with these medications:

Drugs	Effect	Action
Sustiva (efavirenz) or Viramune (nervirapine)	Efavirenz or nevirapine may lower the levels of saquinavir in your blood.	The dose of saquinavir may have to be increased.
Anticonvulsants: phenobarbital, Dilantin (phenytoin) and Tegretol (carbamazepine)	Some anticonvulsants lower the levels of saquinavir making it less effective. Saquinavir may increase the levels of anticonvulsants .	Additional blood tests may be required to monitor the effect of saquinavir on blood levels.
Viagra (sildenafil)	Saquinavir will increase the side effects of sildenafil (low blood pressure, vision changes, penis erection).	If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, seek immediate medical help. You should not take more than 25 mg of sildenafil in any 2 day period.

CAUTIONS:

- Throw away any expired or leftover medication.
- Keep out of reach of children.
- The doctor or Poison Control Centre should be contacted in the event of accidental overdose of this or any other drug.