

Abemaciclib

What is Abemaciclib (ABEM-a-si-clib) and how does it work?

Abemaciclib is a type of oral, targeted cancer therapy called a “cyclin D kinase inhibitor.” Another name for this medicine is Verzenio. This medicine dissolves in your digestive system and is absorbed into your blood. Abemaciclib works to stop the cancer cell’s growth cycle and causes them to lose their ability to divide and spread. Abemaciclib is made in a laboratory.

How is this medicine used to treat my cancer?

Abemaciclib may be given with Fulvestrant (Faslodex) an aromatase inhibitor (Anastrozole, Letrozole, Exemestane), Tamoxifen, or other hormone blocking medicines for women with estrogen receptor (ER)-positive breast cancer. The 2 medicines work together to stop the growth of cancer cells.

This combination of Abemaciclib (Verzenio) and hormone blocking medicine works best when both medicines are given together, as compared to using either medicine alone.

This treatment may be given for advanced breast cancer until it stops working or you have side effects that require you to stop treatment. It may also be given for early-stage breast cancer after surgery, for a period of 2 years.

What should I tell my doctor before I start this treatment?

Talk to your doctor about the following:

- If you have ever had liver or kidney problems.
- If you have ever had a blood clot.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

- If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant. Your doctor will talk with you about birth control when you take these medicines.
- If you are breastfeeding.
- If you have been told that you need to start a new medicine.
- The medicines/pills you are taking, including:
 - ▶ Medicines ordered by any of your doctors
 - ▶ Herbs
 - ▶ Vitamins
 - ▶ Over-the-counter medicines

How does my doctor decide my treatment dose?

To determine your Abemaciclib dose, your doctor will review the following: your white blood cell counts, how well your liver and kidneys work, your medicines and any other health problems you have.

How do I handle, store and dispose of Abemaciclib?

- **There are special safe handling instructions for these medicines.** Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse about the precautions you need to follow when you take these medicines at home.
- Store this medicine in a closed container at room temperature, away from heat, moisture, and direct light.
- **Do not** store in your bathroom or refrigerator.
- **Abemaciclib comes from the pharmacy in individually wrapped containers.**
- Keep this medicine away from children and **do not** share it with anyone.
- **Disposal:**
 - ▶ Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about how to get rid of (dispose) these medicines safely.

How do I take Abemaciclib?

- **Do not** crush, break, chew or open the tablet.
- See your prescription label for how many tablets to take each day and how often.
- There is a check (✓) in the box by your dose of Abemaciclib:
 - 150 mg twice daily
 - 100 mg twice daily
 - 50 mg twice daily
- One “cycle” is 4 weeks.
- Abemaciclib may be taken with or without food. Swallow the tablet whole with a full glass of water.
- Take Abemaciclib at the same time(s) each day.
- If you miss a dose by more than 3 hours, wait until it is time for your next dose, and skip the missed dose. **Do not double up on doses.**
- **Do not** take another dose if you vomit.
- Your doctor may change your dose in the future to find out what works best for you. Taking a lower dose of Abemaciclib does not mean the medicine will not work.
- **Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice, star fruit, or Seville oranges.** These can increase your risk of side effects.

What are the side effects of this treatment?

Every person responds differently to treatment. Some of the more common side effects of Abemaciclib are:

Most common side effects

- Diarrhea
- Low white blood cell counts (can increase risk of infection)
- Low red blood cell counts (can lead to tiredness and weakness)
- Low platelets (can lead to easy bruising or bleeding)
- Stomach upset and/or abdominal pain
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Fatigue or weakness

Less common side effects

- **Blood clots** - call your doctor if you have shortness of breath, sudden and sharp chest pain, rapid heart rate or rapid breathing.
- **Liver injury** - call your doctor if you have severe fatigue, pain in the upper right side of your stomach area, changes in appetite, or if you are bleeding or bruising more easily than normal.

When should I call my doctor?

You should call your doctor right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher

A fever can be life-threatening if not treated. Your doctor may ask you to go to the hospital.

- Nausea that keeps you from eating or drinking
- Diarrhea (4 or more loose stools in 24 hours) or diarrhea at night
- Swelling and/or redness in your legs or arms
- Chest pain, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, or cough that bothers you or will not go away
- Yellowing of your skin or eyes

How should I manage diarrhea?

- Loperamide (Imodium AD) should be started at the first sign of diarrhea.
- Take Loperamide 4 mg at the first sign of diarrhea. Then 2 mg every 4 hours, or after each loose stool, until you have not had another bowel movement for 8 hours. **Do not** follow the directions on the box, follow the directions from your doctor.
- Your doctor may talk to you about other medicines to help control your diarrhea.
- It is important to keep hydrated during treatment. Unless told otherwise by your doctor, drink 8 to 10 cups of non-caffeinated fluid each day.
- Eat small meals often during the day. **Do not** eat big meals.
- **Do not** eat foods that are high in fiber, greasy, spicy, fatty or fried.
- Follow the **BRAT diet (Bananas, Rice, Applesauce, Toast)**.

Is there anything else I should know about this treatment?

- Abemaciclib (Verzenio) may cause changes in your blood counts or liver function tests. Your doctor will want to check your blood counts and liver function at the start of this treatment, every 2 weeks for the first 2 months, and then once a month starting during your 3rd month of treatment.
- This treatment may make it harder for your body to fight infections. Wash your hands often and stay away from people who are sick.

You may also find it helpful to watch The James Patient Education videos at <http://cancer.osu.edu/patientedvideos> to help you learn tips for managing treatment side effects.