

# saquinavir (Invirase®)



200 mg – green / light brown capsule



500 mg – light orange tablet

## What is saquinavir?

Saquinavir is a medicine used to lower the amount of HIV virus in your body and make your immune system stronger. Saquinavir is always used with other HIV medicines.

## How do I take it?

- Take saquinavir as directed on the prescription label:
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- Take at the same time every day
  - Always take saquinavir with food, to make sure the medicine is absorbed into your body
  - Swallow tablets whole (do NOT crush or chew)

Store in a dry place at room temperature, and keep out of reach of children.

## What if I forget to take it?

It is very important to take saquinavir every day to make sure that it keeps working. If you miss a dose, there is a higher chance that the virus will change to a form that is harder to treat. This is called "resistance".

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take 2 doses at the same time. If you are not sure if you should take your dose, call the pharmacist.

If you stop taking HIV medicine, the amount of HIV virus in your blood will increase.

**Do not stop any of your HIV medicines without talking to your doctor.**

## What should I expect?

Saquinavir is usually well tolerated. Side effects may include:

- nausea
- stomach pain
- headache
- changes in cholesterol or blood sugar
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- tiredness
- changes in body fat

Rare, serious side effects may include

- Allergic reaction: Signs include rash, blisters on skin or mouth, swelling of the face or throat, difficulty breathing, fever, flu-like symptoms
- Liver problems: Signs include yellow skin or eyes, dark urine, pale stools, general 'sick' feeling or pain on right side below ribs
- Change in heart beat: Signs include dizziness, fast heart beats, fainting or seizures

**Always tell your doctor or pharmacist if side effects are bothering you. IMMEDIATELY contact your doctor if you have any serious side effects**

It is important to have regular blood tests to watch for side effects and make sure your HIV medicine is working to control the virus.

Talk to your doctor if you are pregnant, are thinking about becoming pregnant, or if you plan to breastfeed.

## Can I take saquinavir with other medicines?

Some medicines may interact with saquinavir. Drug interactions can stop your treatment from working or may cause unwanted side effects.

Always tell your pharmacist and doctor if you are using any prescription or non-prescription medicines, vitamins, supplements, natural medicines or recreational drugs.

Medicines that may interact with saquinavir include:

- Corticosteroid inhalers ('puffers') and nasal sprays such as fluticasone (Flovent<sup>®</sup>, Flonase<sup>®</sup>, Advair<sup>®</sup>), triamcinolone (Nasacort<sup>®</sup>), and budesonide (Pulmicort<sup>®</sup>, Symbicort<sup>®</sup>) can usually NOT be used
- 'Puffers' for asthma with salmeterol (Serevent<sup>®</sup>, Advair<sup>®</sup>)
- Medicines like vardenafil (Levitra<sup>®</sup>), sildenafil (Viagra<sup>®</sup>) and tadalafil (Cialis<sup>®</sup>)
- Some medicines to treat seizures such as phenytoin (Dilantin<sup>®</sup>)
- Some cholesterol medicines
- Some heart medicines such as amiodarone, propafenone, and others
- Some blood thinners such as rivaroxaban (Xarelto<sup>®</sup>), warfarin
- Some migraine headache medicines
- Some pain medicines such as fentanyl
- Some antibiotics such as rifampin
- Some medicines to treat depression and anxiety
- Some birth control medicines

- St. John's wort
- Garlic supplements

This is not a complete list of medicines that interact with saquinavir.

Always check with your pharmacist before starting any new medicines to make sure that they are safe for you.

## What if I have questions?

If you have questions or problems with your medicine, call the St. Paul's Hospital Ambulatory Pharmacy:

**1-888-511-6222**

(Monday to Friday daytime and urgent issues after hours)

To book an appointment to see a St. Paul's Hospital pharmacist, call reception:

**604-806-8060**

(Monday to Friday daytime)

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