

Abemaciclib (Verzenio)

About This Drug

Abemaciclib is used to treat cancer. It is given orally (by mouth).

Possible Side Effects

- Bone marrow suppression. This is a decrease in the number of white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets. This may raise your risk of infection, make you tired and weak (fatigue), and raise your risk of bleeding.
- Nausea and vomiting (throwing up)
- Diarrhea (loose bowel movements)
- Pain in your abdomen
- Tiredness
- Infection
- Decreased appetite (decreased hunger)
- Headache
- Hair loss. Hair loss is often temporary, although with certain medicine, hair loss can sometimes be permanent. Hair loss may happen suddenly or gradually. If you lose hair, you may lose it from your head, face, armpits, pubic area, chest, and/or legs. You may also notice your hair getting thin.

Note: Each of the side effects above was reported in 20% or greater of patients treated with abemaciclib. Not all possible side effects are included above.

Warnings and Precautions

- Severe diarrhea
- Severe decrease in the number of white blood cells
- Fever in the setting of decreased white blood cells, which is a serious condition that can be life-threatening.
- Severe changes in your liver function
- Blood clots including events such as stroke and heart attack, which may be life-threatening. A blood clot in your leg may cause your leg to swell, appear red and warm, and/or cause pain. A blood clot in your lungs may cause trouble breathing, pain when breathing, and/or chest pain.

- Scarring of the lungs that causes stiffness in the lungs and/or inflammation (swelling) of the lungs which makes breathing difficult and can be life-threatening.

Note: Some of the side effects above are very rare. If you have concerns and/or questions, please discuss them with your medical team.

Important Information

- It is important that you notify your doctor and/or nurse at the first sign of diarrhea so they can provide you with anti-diarrhea medication and give you further instructions. Notify your doctor and/or nurse if you are taking anti-diarrhea medication and your symptoms have not improved, or are worsening after 24 hours.

How to Take Your Medication

- Swallow the medicine whole with or without food twice daily. Take this medicine at the same time each day.
- Do not chew, crush or split tablets.
- If any of the tablets are broken, cracked or otherwise not intact, do not take them. Carefully throw away the tablets and wash your hands after handling.
- **Missed dose:** If you miss or vomit a dose, do not take the missed dose at all and do not double up on the next dose. Instead, continue with your regular dosing schedule and contact your physician.
- **Handling:** Wash your hands after handling your medicine. Caretakers should not handle your medicine with bare hands and should wear latex gloves.
- **Storage:** Store this medicine in the original container at room temperature.
- **Disposal of unused medicine:** Do not flush any expired and/or unused medicine down the toilet or drain unless you are specifically instructed to do so on the medication label. Some facilities have take-back programs and/or other options. If you do not have a take-back program in your area, then please discuss with your nurse or your doctor how to dispose of unused medicine.

Treating Side Effects

- Manage tiredness by pacing your activities for the day.
- Be sure to include periods of rest between energy-draining activities.
- To decrease the risk of infection, wash your hands regularly.
- Avoid close contact with people who have a cold, the flu, or other infections.
- Take your temperature as your doctor or nurse tells you, and whenever you feel like you may have a fever.
- To help decrease the risk of bleeding, use a soft toothbrush. Check with your nurse before using dental floss.
- Be very careful when using knives or tools.
- Use an electric shaver instead of a razor.
- Keeping your pain under control is important to your well-being. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you are experiencing pain.



- Drink plenty of fluids (a minimum of eight glasses per day is recommended).
- If you throw up or have loose bowel movements, you should drink more fluids so that you do not become dehydrated (lack of water in the body from losing too much fluid).
- If you have diarrhea, eat low-fiber foods that are high in protein and calories and avoid foods that can irritate your digestive tracts or lead to cramping.
- Ask your nurse or doctor about medicine that can lessen or stop your diarrhea.
- To help with nausea and vomiting, eat small, frequent meals instead of three large meals a day. Choose foods and drinks that are at room temperature. Ask your nurse or doctor about other helpful tips and medicine that is available to help stop or lessen these symptoms.
- To help with decreased appetite, eat small, frequent meals. Eat foods high in calories and protein, such as meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, tofu, eggs, nuts, milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream, pudding, and nutritional supplements.
- Consider using sauces and spices to increase taste. Daily exercise, with your doctor's approval, may increase your appetite.
- To help with hair loss, wash with a mild shampoo and avoid washing your hair every day.
- Avoid rubbing your scalp, pat your hair or scalp dry.
- Avoid coloring your hair.
- Limit your use of hair spray, electric curlers, blow dryers, and curling irons.
- If you are interested in getting a wig, talk to your nurse. You can also call the American Cancer Society at 800-ACS-2345 to find out information about the "Look Good, Feel Better" program close to where you live. It is a free program where women getting chemotherapy can learn about wigs, turbans and scarves as well as makeup techniques and skin and nail care.

Food and Drug Interactions

- Avoid grapefruit or grapefruit juice while taking this medicine. Grapefruit and grapefruit juice may raise the levels of abemaciclib in your body. This could make side effects worse.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist about all other prescription medicines and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs and others) you are taking before starting this medicine as there are known drug interactions with abemaciclib. Also, check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new prescription or over-the-counter medicines, or dietary supplements to make sure that there are no interactions.
- Avoid the use of St. John's Wort while taking abemaciclib as this may lower the levels of the drug in your body, which can make it less effective.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any of these symptoms and/or any new or unusual symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
- Chills
- Tiredness that interferes with your daily activities
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Headache that does not go away



- Easy bleeding or bruising
- Signs of a local infection such as pain, redness, tenderness, warmth and/or swelling
- Your leg or arm is swollen, red, warm and/or painful
- Pain in your chest
- Dry cough
- Wheezing and/or trouble breathing
- Chest pain or symptoms of a heart attack. Most heart attacks involve pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes. The pain may go away and come back. It can feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain. Sometimes pain is felt in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach. **If any of these symptoms last 2 minutes, call 911.**
- Stroke. Symptoms of a stroke such as sudden numbness or weakness of your face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of your body; sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, feeling dizzy, loss of balance or coordination; or sudden bad headache with no known cause. **If any of these symptoms last 2 minutes, call 911.**
- Diarrhea, 4 times in one day or diarrhea with lack of strength or a feeling of being dizzy
- Nausea that stops you from eating or drinking and/or is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Throwing up more than 3 times a day
- Pain in your abdomen that does not go away
- Lasting loss of appetite or rapid weight loss of five pounds in a week
- Signs of possible liver problems: dark urine, pale bowel movements, bad stomach pain, feeling very tired and weak, unusual itching, or yellowing of the eyes or skin
- If you think you may be pregnant

Reproduction Warnings

- **Pregnancy warning:** This drug can have harmful effects on the unborn baby. Women of childbearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment and for at least 3 weeks after treatment. Let your doctor know right away if you think you may be pregnant.
- **Breastfeeding warning:** Women should not breastfeed during treatment and for at least 3 weeks after treatment because this drug could enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** In men, this drug may affect your ability to have children in the future. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children. Ask for information on sperm banking.

Reviewed September 2020

