

# ACICLOVIR

**Brand names** Action Cold Sore Cream, Boots Avert, Cymex Ultra, Lypsyl Aciclovir 5%, Soothelip, Virasorb, Zovirax  
**Used in the following combined preparations** None

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Aciclovir is an antiviral drug used in the treatment of herpes infections, which can cause cold sores and genital herpes. It is available as tablets, a liquid, a cream, eye ointment, and injection. The cream is commonly used to treat cold sores, and can speed up the healing of the lesions, provided it is started as soon as symptoms occur and

as the lesions appear. The tablets and injection are used to treat severe herpes infections, shingles, chickenpox, and genital herpes. The tablets can also be used to prevent the development of herpes infection in people who have reduced immunity. Herpes infection affecting the eye can be treated with an eye ointment.

## QUICK REFERENCE

**Drug group** Antiviral drug (p.91)  
**Overdose danger rating** Low  
**Dependence rating** Low  
**Prescription needed** No (cold sore cream); Yes (other preparations)  
**Available as generic** Yes

## INFORMATION FOR USERS

**Follow instructions on the label. Call your doctor if symptoms worsen.**

### How taken/used



Tablets, liquid, injection, cream, eye ointment.

### Frequency and timing of doses

2–5 x daily. Start as soon as possible.

### Adult dosage range

*Tablets, liquid* 1–4g daily (treatment); 800mg–1.6g daily (prevention).  
*Cream, eye ointment* 5 x daily.

### Onset of effect

Within 24 hours.

### Duration of action

Up to 8 hours.

### Diet advice

It is necessary to drink plenty of water when taking high doses by mouth or injection.

### Storage

Keep in original container at room temperature out of the reach of children. Protect from light.

### Missed dose

*Tablets/liquid* Take as soon as you remember.  
*Cream, eye ointment* Do not apply the missed dose. Apply your next dose as usual.

### Stopping the drug

Complete the full course as directed.

### Exceeding the dose

An occasional unintentional extra dose is unlikely to be a cause for concern. But if you notice any unusual symptoms, or if a large overdose has been taken, notify your doctor.

## SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

**Be sure to consult your doctor or pharmacist before taking this drug if:**

- You have a long-term kidney problem.
- You have reduced immunity.
- You are taking other medicines.



### Pregnancy

Topical preparations carry no known risk. Oral and injectable forms may be prescribed if the benefits outweigh the risks. Discuss with your doctor.



### Breast-feeding

No evidence of risk with topical forms. The drug passes into the breast milk following injection or oral administration. Discuss with your doctor.



### Infants and children

Reduced dose necessary in young children.



### Over 60

Reduced dose may be necessary.



### Driving and hazardous work

No known problems.



### Alcohol

No known problems.

## POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS

Serious adverse effects are rare. The cream commonly causes discomfort at the site of

application. Confusion and hallucinations occur rarely with injections.

Symptom/effect	Frequency		Discuss with doctor		Stop taking drug now	Call doctor now
	Common	Rare	Only if severe	In all cases		
<b>Topical applications</b>						
Burning/stinging/itching	●		●			
Rash		●		●	●	
<b>By mouth</b>						
Nausea/vomiting		●	●			
Dizziness		●		●		
Confusion/hallucinations		●		●		
Rash		●		●		
<b>Injection</b>						
Inflammation at injection site		●		●		
Confusion/hallucinations		●		●		

## INTERACTIONS (by mouth or injection only)

**General note** Any drug that affects the kidneys increases the risk of side effects with aciclovir.

**Probenecid and cimetidine** These drugs may increase the level of aciclovir in the blood.

**Mycophenolate mofetil** Aciclovir may increase the levels of this drug in the blood and vice versa.

## PROLONGED USE

Aciclovir is usually given as single courses of treatment and is not given long term, except for people with reduced immunity.