

Tolvaptan

Pharmacy Information Sheet

What it does:

Tolvaptan is a medication that slows the growth of kidney cysts in patients with autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease, also known as ADPKD. This may slow the progress of kidney problems in some patients.

How it works:

Tolvaptan works by blocking a hormone called vasopressin. Vasopressin helps the body hold onto water. Vasopressin is also one of many factors that leads to growth of kidney cysts in patients with ADPKD. Blocking this hormone may help to slow cyst growth.

How to take it:

Tolvaptan is taken as two pills per day – a bigger dose in the morning and a smaller dose in the afternoon. The afternoon dose should be taken approximately 8 hours after the morning dose with or without food. Drink lots of water to avoid getting thirsty or dehydrated (dry) while taking this medication, unless you are told otherwise by your doctor. If you have an illness that causes you to vomit or have diarrhea AND you are unable to eat or drink normally, stop taking tolvaptan until you are able to drink fluids again. Contact your doctor if you have to stop taking tolvaptan for 2 days.

Other medications (prescription, over the counter or supplements) may interact with tolvaptan. Talk with your doctor and pharmacist before starting a new medication so that they can ensure that it is safe to take with tolvaptan.

What to do if you miss a dose:

If you miss a dose, take your next dose at the scheduled time and at your regular dose. Do not take 2 doses at the same time, or take extra doses.

Possible side effects:

The most common and expected side effects with tolvaptan are increased thirst and passing more urine during the day and night. Talk to your kidney doctor if these symptoms are intolerable for you.

Less common side effects include increased potassium levels in the blood. This can cause a heartbeat that does not feel normal, muscle weakness and a general feeling of being unwell. Another side effect is higher than normal levels of uric acid in the blood, resulting in a condition called gout. If you have gout, you experience joint pain (often in the big toe), followed by redness, swelling or warmth.

A rare side effect is liver problems, which can be very serious. Signs of liver problems include yellowing of the skin or eyes, dark urine, upset stomach, throwing up, or not being hungry. If these symptoms occur, stop taking tolvaptan and speak with your doctor right away.

Relation to diet:

Timing of food does not affect tolvaptan. You will likely be thirstier while taking tolvaptan and may notice that you are drinking more water. Making adjustments to your diet can help decrease your thirst and the amount of urine you pass. This can include limiting salt and protein intake. Speak to your kidney doctor or kidney dietitian for more information on this.

You should avoid eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice while taking tolvaptan, as this may increase the levels of tolvaptan in the body.

Monitoring:

You will need to get frequent blood tests while taking tolvaptan to check for signs of liver damage. These blood tests need to be done before every refill of tolvaptan. If you are unable to complete the regular blood work requirements, your pharmacy will not dispense tolvaptan to you.

To allow enough time to process your refill, you should have your blood tests done 1 to 2 weeks before your scheduled refill date.

What to do if you are traveling or cannot get blood tests for over 1 month:

During the first 18 months you are taking tolvaptan, your kidney doctor must review blood tests every month before the pharmacy can dispense tolvaptan refills. If you are traveling outside of British Columbia for more than 1 month, your scheduled blood test must be arranged at your travel destination and be reviewed by your kidney doctor in British Columbia. If these arrangements are made in advance, the pharmacy can then dispense a maximum of 8 weeks of tolvaptan. If you travel for more than 8 weeks, or if you are unable to arrange blood tests, you will have to finish your supply and then temporarily stop tolvaptan until you return to British Columbia. Temporarily stopping tolvaptan usually will not result in any issues.

Use the space below to write down why you are taking this medication and other notes:
