

Famvir® (fam-veer) for genital herpes

famciclovir (fam-SYE-klo-veer)

Consumer Medicine Information

What is in this leaflet

This leaflet answers some common questions about Famvir.

It does not contain all the available information. It does not take the place of talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

The information in this leaflet was last updated on the date listed on the final page.

Some more recent information on the medicine may be available.

You should ensure that you speak to your pharmacist or doctor to obtain the most up to date information on the medicine.

You can also download the most up to date leaflet from www.novartis.com.au.

Those updates may contain important information about the medicine and its use of which you should be aware.

All medicines have risks and benefits. Your doctor has weighed the risks of you taking Famvir against the benefits it can provide.

If you have any concerns about this medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Keep this leaflet with the medicine. You may need to read it again.

What Famvir is used for

Famvir is an antiviral medicine for adults and adolescents. It is used to treat outbreaks of genital herpes and also to suppress (prevent) recurrent outbreaks of the condition.

Genital herpes is a viral infection caused by herpes simplex 1 or herpes simplex 2. It is usually transmitted through sexual contact.

Symptoms include tingling burning or itching of the genitals, followed by blisters that may be painful.

People who have frequent episodes of genital herpes can also take Famvir to help prevent the attacks.

Although Famvir does not cure the viral infection, it helps to relieve the symptoms and shorten their duration.

The best results are obtained if the medicine is started as soon as possible after the first symptoms begin to appear.

Taking Famvir does not prevent you from spreading the herpes virus to another person.

Ask your doctor if you have any questions about why this medicine has been prescribed for you.

Your doctor may have prescribed it for another reason.

Famvir is only available with a doctor's prescription. It is not addictive.

This medicine is not recommended for use in children under 12 years of age.

Before you take Famvir

When you must not take it

Do not take Famvir if you have an allergy to:

- famciclovir, the active ingredient
- penciclovir, a related antiviral medicine
- any of the other ingredients of Famvir listed at the end of this leaflet

Some of the symptoms of an allergic reaction may include:

- shortness of breath, wheezing or difficulty breathing;
- swelling of the face, lips, tongue or other parts of the body;
- rash, itching or hives on the skin.

Do not take Famvir after the expiry date printed on the pack or if the packaging is torn or if it shows signs of tampering.

In that case, return it to your pharmacist.

Before you start to take it

Tell your doctor if you have a problem with:

- your body's immune system, which helps to fight off infections
- your kidneys
- your liver

Your doctor may want to take extra precautions in that case.

Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, intend to become pregnant or if you are breast-feeding.

It is not known whether taking this medicine during pregnancy could affect your baby or whether the active ingredient in Famvir passes into the breast milk. Your doctor can discuss with you the benefits and risks involved.

Tell your doctor if you are lactose intolerant.

This medicine contains lactose.

Tell your doctor if you are allergic to any other medicines, foods, dyes or preservatives.

Your doctor will want to know if you are prone to allergies.

If you experience an allergic reaction, stop using the medicine and inform your doctor or pharmacist immediately.

Taking other medicines

Tell your doctor if you are taking any other medicines, including any that you buy without a prescription from a pharmacy, supermarket or health food shop.

Some medicines and Famvir may interfere with each other. These include:

- probenecid, a prescription medicine used to treat gout (a disease with painful, swollen joints caused by uric acid crystals)
- medicines that can affect your kidneys.

You may need to take different amounts of these medicines or you may need to take different medicines. Your doctor and pharmacist have more information.

If you have not told your doctor about any of these things, tell him/her before you start taking this medicine.

How to take Famvir

Swallow the tablets whole with a full glass of water.

The tablets may be taken with or without food.

If you do not understand the instructions on the label, ask your doctor or pharmacist for help.

How much to take

Follow your doctor's instructions on how many Famvir tablets to take.

These instructions may differ from the information contained in this leaflet.

Do not change the dose yourself, without your doctor's advice, regardless of how well you may feel.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are unsure of the correct dose for you.

They will tell you exactly how much to take.

For people whose immune system does not work as well as it should, the dose and duration of treatment may need to be increased.

For people who have reduced kidney function, the dose may need to be reduced.

When to take it

There are different ways to take Famvir depending on your condition.

1. To treat an outbreak of genital herpes

To treat an outbreak, take the tablets as soon as possible after the first symptoms of genital herpes appear.

The tablets are best taken within 6 hours of the first symptoms of genital herpes appearing.

There are two ways to take Famvir to treat an outbreak of genital herpes

and your doctor will tell you which regimen is best for you:

- Two 250 mg Famvir tablets to start with, followed by one 250 mg tablet every 12 hours for the next 3 doses
or
- One 125 mg Famvir tablet every 12 hours for 5 days

Both of these outbreak treatment doses deliver the same total quantity of famciclovir (1250 mg) during the treatment course.

Take the second and subsequent doses 12 hours after the first dose, or as close as possible to 12 hours during waking hours.

If you take the first dose in the late morning or early afternoon, you can take the next dose before going to bed, but do not take any doses less than 6 hours apart.

During normal waking hours, take any remaining doses at 12 hourly intervals.

Your doctor may have prescribed a different dose.

2. To suppress (prevent) outbreaks of recurrent genital herpes

Start suppressive treatment to prevent outbreaks of recurrent genital herpes as soon as possible after you have your Famvir prescription filled.

Take one 250 mg Famvir tablet twice each day.

Continue to take one 250 mg Famvir tablet twice each day for as long as your doctor tells you to. Do this even if you do not have an outbreak.

This medicine helps to control your condition but does not cure it. Your doctor will tell you when you can stop.

Fill your next repeat prescription before using all of the tablets in your current carton.

This will ensure that your treatment can be continued and give you the best results.

Try to take the tablets at about the same times each day, as directed by your doctor or pharmacist.

Taking your tablet at the same times each day will have the best effect. It will also help you remember when to take the tablets.

How long to take it

Continue taking Famvir every day for as long as your doctor tells you.

To help clear up your infection, you must keep taking this medicine, even if your symptoms begin to clear up after a few days.

To prevent recurrent episodes of genital herpes, you must take the tablets each day, even if you have no symptoms.

It is important to keep taking your medicine even if you feel well.

If you forget to take it

Take a dose as soon as you remember. Take your next tablet at the usual time, and then go back to taking it as you would normally.

Do not take a double dose to make up for the one that you missed.

This may increase the chance of you getting an unwanted side effect.

If you have trouble remembering when to take your medicine, ask your pharmacist for some hints.

If you take too much (Overdose)

Immediately telephone your doctor or the Poisons Information Centre (telephone number 13 11 26), or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital if you think that you or anyone else may have taken too much Famvir. Do this even if there are no signs of discomfort or poisoning. Keep the telephone numbers for these places handy.

While you are taking Famvir

Things you must do

If you become pregnant while taking Famvir, tell your doctor.

Your doctor can discuss with you the risks of taking it while you are pregnant.

If you are about to be started on any new medicine, remind your doctor and pharmacist that you are taking Famvir.

Tell any other doctor, dentist or pharmacist who treats you that you are taking Famvir.

Things you must not do

Do not give this medicine to anyone else even if their condition seems to be the same as yours.

Do not use it to treat any other complaints unless your doctor tells you to.

Do not stop taking your tablets or change the dosage without checking with your doctor first.

If you stop your tablets suddenly, your condition may worsen or you may have unwanted side effects.

Things to be careful of

Be careful driving, operating machinery or doing jobs that require you to be alert until you know how Famvir affects you.

This medicine can cause dizziness, sleepiness or confusion in some people.

Avoid sexual intercourse when symptoms are present, even if you have started taking Famvir, because the risk of infecting your partner is increased.

Things that may help your condition

Take the following precautions to help manage your condition:

- Use condoms between episodes to reduce the risk of infecting your partner
- Keep the areas affected by the virus as clean and dry as possible
- Wear loose-fitting clothing to avoid irritating the blisters
- Avoid touching or scratching the sore area as you may spread the virus on your fingers.

Side effects

Tell your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible if you do not feel well while you are taking Famvir.

All medicines can have side effects. Sometimes they are serious, most of the time they are not. You may need medical treatment if you get some of the side effects.

Do not be alarmed by these lists of possible side effects.

You may not experience any of them.

Tell your doctor if you notice any of the following side effects and they worry you:

- headache
- dizziness
- nausea (feeling sick) or vomiting
- diarrhoea

The above side effects are usually mild.

Tell your doctor as soon as possible if you notice any of the following:

- a rash on other parts of your body
- extreme sleepiness or confusion, usually in older people
- hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not really there)
- painful or swollen joints
- aching muscles or muscle tenderness or weakness that is not caused by exercise.

The above side effects may need medical attention.

Tell your doctor immediately or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital if any of the following side effects happen to you:

- bruising or bleeding more easily than usual as it may indicate that the number of platelets (a type of blood cell responsible for blood clotting) in your blood are reduced
- signs of a serious skin or mouth reaction, which may include widespread red, raised areas, blisters or sores
- signs of a possible liver problem such as persistent pain in the upper right abdomen, yellowing of the skin and/or eyes, dark urine or pale bowel motions

The above side effects are very rare.

Tell your doctor if you notice anything else that is making you feel unwell.

Other side effects not listed here or not yet known may happen in some people.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist to answer any questions you may have.

After using Famvir

Storage

Keep your medicine in the original container until it is time to take it.

Store your Famvir tablets in a dry place at room temperature.

Do not store your medicines in the bathroom or near a sink.

Do not leave the tablets in the car or on window sills.

Heat and dampness can destroy some medicines. Famvir® tablets will keep best if they are stored cool and dry.

Keep the medicine where children cannot reach it.

A locked cupboard at least one-and-

a-half metres above the ground is a good place to store medicines.

Disposal

If your doctor tells you to stop taking this medicine or the expiry date has passed, ask your pharmacist what to do with any medicine that you have left over.

Product description

What it looks like

Famvir comes in two tablet strengths for the treatment of genital herpes:

1. Famvir 125 mg tablets are white round tablets, marked with “FV” on one side and “125” on the other. Each carton contains 40 tablets.
2. Famvir 250 mg tablets are white round tablets, marked with “FV” on one side and “250” on the other. Each carton contains either 20 or 56 tablets.

Ingredients

Active Ingredient

Famvir 125 - contain 125 mg famciclovir per tablet

Famvir 250 - contain 250 mg famciclovir per tablet.

Inactive ingredients

Famvir 125 and 250 mg tablets also contain:

- lactose
- hypromellose (E 464)
- hydroxypropylcellulose (E 463)
- macrogol
- magnesium stearate (E 572)
- sodium starch glycollate
- titanium dioxide (E 171)

Famvir tablets do not contain sucrose, gluten, tartrazine or any other azo dyes.

More information

For more information about genital herpes, visit www.herpes.com.au.

Sponsor

Famvir is supplied in Australia by:

NOVARTIS Pharmaceuticals
Australia Pty Limited
ABN 18 004 244 160
54 Waterloo Road
North Ryde NSW 2113
Telephone 1 800 671 203
Web site: www.novartis.com.au

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This leaflet was prepared in August 2009

Australian Registration Numbers:
Famvir 125 mg AUST R 54668
Famvir 250 mg AUST R 51389