



KETOCONAZOLE (NIZORAL)

Summary

Ketoconazole is a drug used to treat or prevent fungal infections. HIV positive people use it most often to treat thrush. Some people also use it to boost the amount of saquinavir (Invirase) that their bodies can absorb. However, with the introduction of Fortovase, the new formulation of saquinavir, this is unnecessary. Moreover, saquinavir levels can be more effectively boosted by taking it with another protease inhibitor called ritonavir (Norvir).

What is ketoconazole?

Ketoconazole, sold under the brand name Nizoral, is a drug used to treat a variety of fungal infections. People with HIV use ketoconazole most often to treat candidiasis in the mouth (thrush), throat (esophageal candidiasis) or vagina (yeast infection).

How is ketoconazole used?

Ketoconazole is used to treat fungal infections and to prevent them from coming back.

Treatment

The amount of ketoconazole and the length time it is taken can vary, depending on the type and severity of the infection. As a rough guide,

- thrush may be treated with 200 mg - 400 mg ketoconazole taken once daily for two weeks;
- esophageal candidiasis may be treated with 200 mg - 400 mg ketoconazole taken twice daily for three weeks;
- vaginal yeast infections may be treated with 200 mg - 400 mg ketoconazole taken once or twice a day for five to seven days.

Prevention

Some HIV positive people with severely weakened immune systems and very low CD4+ counts cells may frequently get thrush or yeast infections. Some people choose to treat each episode, going off drugs when the infection has cleared up. Others prefer to take 100 mg - 200 mg ketoconazole three times a week to keep the fungus under control.

Candidiasis in the esophagus (the tube connecting the mouth to the stomach) is an AIDS-defining illness. Esophageal candidiasis is a serious condition that can be effectively treated. After this infection has cleared up, many doctors recommend taking 200 mg ketoconazole three times a week to keep it from coming back.

Side effects

The most common side effects of ketoconazole are nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and itching. Headache, dizziness, fever and chills have been reported less frequently.

Warning

Ketoconazole should not be used by people



with liver damage. Liver function tests, which measure the levels of liver enzymes in the blood, should be done before starting ketoconazole and regularly monitored during treatment.

Pregnant women or women planning to become pregnant should not use ketoconazole.

Drug interactions

Ketoconazole should be taken with food. Taking it with orange juice or a cola drink, like Coke or Pepsi, can also help the body absorb the drug.

Ketoconazole should be taken either two hours before or two hours after taking

- medications to control heartburn (Maalox, Diavol, Gavison, etc.)
- anti-ulcer drugs cimetidine (Tagamet) and ranitidine (Zantac)
- ddl (Videx).

Drinking alcohol while taking ketoconazole may cause nausea, vomiting and flushing of the skin.

Drugs that should **not** be taken with ketoconazole include:

- cisapride (Prepulsid)
- midazolam (Versed), triazolam (Halcion)
- the anti-TB drugs rifampin and isoniazid
- the antihistamines terfenadine (Seldane) and astemizole (Hismanal)

Check with your doctor and pharmacist about possible interactions with other medications or supplements you take.

Credits

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Disclaimer

Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV-related illness and the treatments in question.

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