DAPSONE (AVLOSULFON)

Summary

Dapsone is a drug taken to prevent or treat *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP).

What is dapsone?

Dapsone is an antibacterial drug sold under the brand name Avlosulfon. HIV positive people use dapsone to prevent or treat *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP).

Prevention

Any treatment taken to prevent an illness is called *prophylaxis*. Dapsone is an effective prophylaxis against PCP for people who cannot tolerate Septra. Most people who use dapsone take 100 mg daily. Sometimes doctors prescribe 25 mg - 75 mg pyremethamine as an additional drug to be taken once a week. When using dapsone and pyremethamine together, many people take 10 mg - 25 mg of the B-vitamin folinic acid weekly to protect against bone marrow toxicity.

Treatment

As a treatment for active mild to moderate PCP, 100 mg dapsone can be taken daily, together with 200 mg trimethoprim taken four times a day, for about 21 days.

Side effects

The most common side effects of dapsone are nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dizziness and blurred vision. Less common but more serious side effects can include pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas) and anaemia (a drop in the levels of hemoglobin or red blood cells). Dapsone can cause a hypersensitivity reaction. This “dapsone syndrome” may appear as a rash, fever, jaundice or skin eruptions in the first six weeks of treatment. Dapsone can also cause peripheral neuropathy—a burning, tingling, numb or painful sensation in the hands or feet. There have been no reports of side effects unique to women.

Warning

People with G6PD (glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase) deficiency should not use dapsone because it can cause blood cells to burst, producing severe anaemia. This enzyme deficiency is usually found in men of Eastern Mediterranean or African origin.

Drug interactions

- When used with ddl, ddC or d4T, dapsone may increase the risk of developing peripheral neuropathy.
- Dapsone should be taken two hours before or two hours after ddl. ddl tablets contain a buffer that can decrease the absorption of dapsone and reduce its effectiveness.
- The anti-TB drug rifampin can also reduce the level of dapsone in the blood and therefore reduce its effectiveness.
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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