**Abemaciclib (Verzenio®)**

**Pronounced:** a-bem-a-SYE-klib

**Classification:** Kinase Inhibitor

### About Abemaciclib (Verzenio®)

A kinase is an enzyme that promotes cell growth. There are many types of kinases, which control different phases of cell growth. By blocking a particular enzyme from working, this medication can slow the growth of cancer cells. This medication is an inhibitor of CDK4 and CDK6. Abemaciclib is specifically a cyclin dependent kinase inhibitor.

### How to Take Abemaciclib

This medication comes in tablet form to be taken by mouth. It can be taken with or without food. It should be swallowed whole, it should not be broken, crushed, or chewed. It is taken twice daily and your dose depends on why you are receiving the medication. It may or may not be given in combination with other medications. If you miss a dose, skip that dose and continue to take your medication as scheduled.

It is important to make sure you are taking the correct amount of medication every time. Before every dose, check that what you are taking matches what you have been prescribed.

The blood levels of this medication can be affected by certain foods and medications, so they should be avoided. These include: grapefruit, grapefruit juice, verapamil, amiodarone, diltiazem, fluconazole, itraconazole, ketoconazole, posaconazole, voriconazole, rifampin, phenytoin, St. John's wort, carbamazepine, phenobarbital and modafanil, among others. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about all medications and supplements you take.

### Storage and Handling

Store your medication in the original, labeled container at room temperature and in a dry location (unless otherwise directed by your healthcare provider or pharmacist). This medication should not be stored in a pillbox. Keep containers out of reach of children and pets.

If a caregiver prepares your dose for you, they should consider wearing gloves or pour the pills directly from their container into the cap, a small cup, or directly into your hand. They should avoid touching the pills. They should always wash their hands before and after giving you the medication. Pregnant or nursing women should not prepare the dose for you. Ask your oncology team where to return any unused medication for disposal. Do not flush down the toilet or throw it in the trash.

### Where do I get this medication?

Certain cancer medications are only available through specialty pharmacies. If you need to get this medication through a specialty pharmacy, your provider will help you start this process. Where you can fill your prescriptions may also be influenced by your prescription drug coverage. Ask your health care provider or pharmacist for assistance in identifying where you can get this medication.

### Insurance Information

This medication may be covered under your prescription drug plan. Patient assistance may be available to qualifying individuals depending upon prescription drug coverage. Co-pay cards, which reduce the patient co-pay responsibility for
eligible commercially (non-government sponsored) insured patients, may also be available. Your care team can help you find these resources if they are available.

### Possible Side Effects

There are a number of things you can do to manage the side effects of abemaciclib. Talk to your care team about these recommendations. They can help you decide what will work best for you. These are some of the most common or important side effects:

#### Blood Clots

This medication can increase the risk of blood clots (DVT or PE). Symptoms can include swelling, redness or pain in an extremity or shortness of breath. If you experience symptoms of these problems, you should contact your healthcare provider immediately or go to an emergency room.

#### Diarrhea

Diarrhea can be a serious side effect of this medication. As soon as you start to have diarrhea (usually within the first week), you should start taking anti-diarrheal medications and start drinking more fluids. Notify your care provider if you start to have diarrhea to determine which medications you should be taking. Diarrhea can lead to dehydration so it is important to manage this side effect.

#### Infection and Low White Blood Cell Count (Leukopenia or Neutropenia)

This medication can cause life-threatening infections, with or without a decrease in white blood cell counts.

White blood cells (WBC) are important for fighting infection. While receiving treatment, your WBC count can drop, putting you at a higher risk of getting an infection. You should let your doctor or nurse know right away if you have a fever (temperature greater than 100.4 °F or 38 °C), sore throat or cold, shortness of breath, cough, burning with urination, or a sore that doesn’t heal.

**Tips to preventing infection:**

- **Washing hands**, both yours and your visitors, is the best way to prevent the spread of infection.
- Avoid large crowds and people who are sick (i.e., those who have a cold, fever, or cough or live with someone with these symptoms).
- When working in your yard, wear protective clothing including long pants and gloves.
- Do not handle pet waste.
- Keep all cuts or scratches clean.
- Shower or bath daily and perform frequent mouth care.
- Do not cut cuticles or ingrown nails. You may wear nail polish, but not fake nails.
- Ask your oncology care team before scheduling dental appointments or procedures.
- Ask your oncology care team before you, or someone you live with has any vaccinations.

#### Fatigue

Fatigue is very common during cancer treatment and is an overwhelming feeling of exhaustion that is not usually relieved by rest. While on cancer treatment, and for a period after, you may need to adjust your schedule to manage fatigue. Plan times to rest during the day and conserve energy for more important activities. Exercise can help combat fatigue; a simple daily walk with a friend can help. Talk to your healthcare team for helpful tips on dealing with this side effect.

#### Nausea and/or Vomiting

Talk to your oncology care team so they can prescribe medications to help you manage nausea and vomiting. In addition, dietary changes may help. Avoid things that may worsen the symptoms, such as heavy or greasy/fatty, spicy or acidic foods (lemons, tomatoes, oranges). Try saltines, or ginger ale to lessen symptoms.

Call your oncology care team if you are unable to keep fluids down for more than 12 hours or if you feel lightheaded or dizzy at any time.
**Low Red Blood Cell Count (Anemia)**
Your red blood cells are responsible for carrying oxygen to the tissues in your body. When the red cell count is low, you may feel tired or weak. You should let your oncology care team know if you experience any shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or pain in your chest. If the count gets too low, you may receive a blood transfusion.

**Loss or Thinning of Scalp and Body Hair (Alopecia)**
Your hair may become thin, brittle, or may fall out. This typically begins two to three weeks after treatment starts. This hair loss can be all body hair, including pubic, underarm, legs/arms, eyelashes, and nose hairs. The use of scarves, wigs, hats, and hairpieces may help. Hair generally starts to regrow soon after treatment is completed. Remember your hair helps keep you warm in cold weather, so a hat is particularly important in cold weather or to protect you from the sun.

**Decrease in Appetite**
Nutrition is an important part of your care. Cancer treatment can affect your appetite and, in some cases, the side effects of treatment can make eating difficult. Ask your oncology care team about nutritional counseling services at your treatment center to help with food choices.

- Try to eat five or six small meals or snacks throughout the day, instead of 3 larger meals.
- If you are not eating enough, nutritional supplements may help.
- You may experience a metallic taste or find that food has no taste at all. You may dislike foods or beverages that you liked before receiving cancer treatment. These symptoms can last for several months or longer after treatment ends.
- Avoid any food that you think smells or tastes bad. If red meat is a problem, eat chicken, turkey, eggs, dairy products, and fish without a strong smell. Sometimes cold food has less of an odor.
- Add extra flavor to meat or fish by marinating it in sweet juices, sweet and sour sauce, or dressings. Use seasonings like basil, oregano, or rosemary to add flavor. Bacon, ham, and onion can add flavor to vegetables.

**Headache**
Your healthcare provider can recommend medications and other strategies to help relieve pain.

**Low Platelet Count (Thrombocytopenia)**
Platelets help your blood clot, so when the count is low you are at a higher risk of bleeding. Let your oncology care team know if you have any excess bruising or bleeding, including nose bleeds, bleeding gums, or blood in your urine or stool. If the platelet count becomes too low, you may receive a transfusion of platelets.

- Do not use a razor (an electric razor is fine).
- Avoid contact sports and activities that can result in injury or bleeding.
- Do not take aspirin (salicylic acid), non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) such as Motrin/Advil (ibuprofen), Aleve (naproxen), Celebrex (celecoxib), etc. as these can all increase the risk of bleeding. Please consult with your healthcare team regarding the use of these agents and all over-the-counter medications/supplements while on therapy.
- Do not floss or use toothpicks and use a soft-bristle toothbrush to brush your teeth.

**Kidney Problems**
This medication can cause kidney problems, including an increased creatinine level, which your oncology care team may monitor for using blood tests. Notify your healthcare provider if you notice decreased urine output, blood in the urine, swelling in the ankles, or loss of appetite.

**Liver Toxicity**
This medication can cause liver toxicity, which your oncology care team may monitor for using blood tests called liver function tests. Notify your healthcare provider if you notice yellowing of the skin or eyes, your urine appears dark or brown, or you have pain in your abdomen, as these can be signs of liver toxicity.

**Less common, but important side effects can include:**

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• **Lung Inflammation:** In rare cases, this medication can cause inflammation of the lungs which can lead to interstitial lung disease or pneumonitis. If you have a new cough (with or without mucous), trouble breathing, shortness of breath, or chest pain, call your provider right away.

**Sexual & Reproductive Concerns**

Studies have not been performed, but this medication may affect the reproductive system in men, resulting in sperm production becoming irregular or stopping permanently. You may want to consider sperm banking if you may wish to have a child in the future. Discuss these options with your oncology team.

Exposure of an unborn child to this medication could cause birth defects, so you should not become pregnant or father a child while on this medication. Effective birth control is necessary during treatment and for at least 3 weeks after treatment, even if your menstrual cycle stops or you believe you are not producing sperm. You should not breastfeed while taking this medication or for 3 weeks after you have stopped treatment.

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