Acalabrutinib (Calquence ®)

**Pronounced:** a-KAL-a-broo-ti-nib

**Classification:** Kinase Inhibitor

**About Acalabrutinib (Calquence ®)**

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 Bruton tyrosine kinase.

**How to Take Acalabrutinib**

This medication comes as a capsule to be taken by mouth. It should be swallowed whole with water, with or without food. You should not break, open, or chew the capsule. Contact your pharmacist or care provider if you are unable to swallow the capsules. If you forget to take your dose and it has been more than 3 hours, skip that dose and take your next dose as scheduled. Do not take extra medication to make up for the missed dose.

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, Seville oranges (often used in marmalade), St. John’s Wort, itraconazole, erythromycin, fluconazole, rifampin, and diltiazem, among others. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about all medications and supplements you take.

"Heartburn" medications can affect how your cancer medication is absorbed. You should not take proton pump inhibitors such as Prilosec (omeprazole), Nexium (pantoprazoline), or Protonix (pantoprazole). You should take acalabrutinib 2 hours before you take any H2 blockers, such as Pepcid (famotidine). Also, you should not take any antacids, such as Tums (calcium-carbonate) and Rolaids (Calcium Carbonate and Magnesium Hydroxide) for 2 hours before or after your dose of acalabrutinib. If needed, please ask your care team the best “heartburn” medication to use and when to take it.

This medication can cause serious bleeding in some cases. Speak to your care provider if you take a blood thinning medication as this could lead to severe bleeding.

**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 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 acalabrutinib. 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:

**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.

**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 medications and all over-the-counter medications/supplements while on therapy.
- Do not floss or use toothpicks. Use a soft-bristle toothbrush to brush your teeth.

**Headache**

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

**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.

**Diarrhea**

Notify your oncology team if the number of bowel movements you have in a day increases by 6 or more. Talk with your oncology team about which over-the-counter medications you can take and how to take them, as this will often differ from the instructions on the box.

Also, try eating low-fiber, bland foods, such as white rice and boiled or baked chicken. Avoid raw fruits, vegetables, whole-grain breads, cereals, and seeds. Soluble fiber is found in some foods and absorbs fluid, which can help relieve diarrhea. Foods high in soluble fiber include: applesauce, bananas (ripe), canned fruit, orange sections, boiled potatoes, white rice, products made with white flour, oatmeal, cream of rice, cream of wheat, and farina. Drink 8-10 glasses of non-alcoholic, un-caffeinated fluid a day to prevent dehydration.

**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.

**Muscle or Joint Pain/Aches**

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

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

- **Bruising/Bleeding/Hemorrhage:** In some cases, this medication can cause hemorrhage or severe bleeding. If you have any bleeding including a nosebleed, bleeding with bowel movements, dark or tarry stools, blood in your vomit or coughing up blood, have blood in your urine, suddenly become confused or have trouble speaking, or a severe headache, call your provider immediately. You should consult with your care provider about stopping this medication for 3-7 days prior to and after some surgeries.

- **Heart Problems:** In rare cases, this medication can cause an abnormal heart rhythm called atrial fibrillation or atrial flutter. Contact your care provider if you are having heart palpitations, if you are lightheaded, dizzy, short of breath, or are having chest discomfort.

- **Secondary Malignancies:** There is a low risk of developing skin cancer or another type of cancer due to treatment with this medication, which can occur many years after treatment. This is most often associated with repeated treatments or high doses. Your oncology care team will provide instructions on how to best follow up and be monitored for this.

**Reproductive Concerns**

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 1 week after treatment. Even if your menstrual cycle stops or you believe you are not producing sperm, you could still be fertile and conceive. You should not breastfeed while taking this medication and for 2 weeks after your last dose.

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