



Mass General Brigham  
Mass General Cancer Center

# Verzenio (abemaciclib)

Oral targeted therapy teaching

# Topics to Discuss:

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### Treatment Regimen

What is oral targeted cancer therapy?

What is abemaciclib (Verzenio)?

How to take abemaciclib (Verzenio)

Keeping Track of Your Medication

Side Effects

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# What is Oral Targeted Cancer Therapy?

- Oral targeted therapy is oral cancer therapy that is taken by mouth and comes in a tablet or capsule form.
- It may be prescribed along with other types of cancer therapies such as chemotherapy or hormone therapy.
- Oral targeted therapy “targets” the changes in cells that cause cancer.
- It can identify and attack certain types of cancer cells and can impact the environment in which a cancer cell grows, or it can target and alter cells that help cancer grow.

## 1

### Treatment Regimen

What is oral targeted cancer therapy?

What is abemaciclib (Verzenio)?

How to take abemaciclib (Verzenio)

Keeping Track of Your Medication

Side Effects

# What is Verzenio (abemaciclib)?

- Verzenio (abemaciclib) is known as a CDK4/6 inhibitor and is a type of oral targeted therapy
- **How does it work?** Verzenio (abemaciclib) blocks proteins known as CDK (cyclin-dependent kinase) 4 and 6. When activity of CDK 4 and 6 is increased, there is a loss of cell cycle control that leads to increased cell growth and division. By blocking CDK 4 and 6, Verzenio (abemaciclib) disrupts breast cancer cell growth and slows tumor progression.
- Verzenio (abemaciclib) is used in combination with endocrine therapy (anastrozole, exemestane, letrozole, tamoxifen, or fulvestrant) or by itself

# How to take Verzenio (abemaciclib)?

## You will take abemaciclib following a 28-day cycle:

- Take abemaciclib twice daily (12 hours apart) for 28 days.
- Take with or without food
- Take around the same time each day
- Your doctor will tell you how long you will be on this therapy for.

## You *may* take abemaciclib in combination with endocrine therapy:

- An aromatase inhibitor (anastrozole, letrozole, exemestane) or tamoxifen should be taken every day throughout the 28-day cycle when used with abemaciclib.
- Abemaciclib may instead be combined with fulvestrant (Faslodex) injection.

# How to take Verzenio (abemaciclib)?

- Take your medication as directed by your cancer team.
- Your cancer team may modify the dose or schedule based on lab results or side effects.
- Swallow whole with water and do not break, chew, or crush your tablet or capsule.
- If you miss a dose, skip the dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. **Do not** take 2 doses at the same time to make up for the missed dose.

# Keeping Track of Your Verzenio (abemaciclib)

- Create a medicine calendar either on paper or in your tablet or phone to keep track of your doses.
- Share the calendar with your cancer treatment team at visits.
- Pill boxes can be used to keep track of your oral targeted therapy doses. Do not mix other pills in the box you use for your oral targeted therapy.

# Keeping Track of Your Verzenio (abemaciclib)

My start date this cycle: \_\_\_\_\_

My dose: \_\_\_\_\_

DAY OF THE WEEK	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
<b>WEEK 1</b> Abemaciclib +/- Aromatase Inhibitor							
<b>WEEK 2</b> Abemaciclib +/- Aromatase Inhibitor							
<b>WEEK 3</b> Abemaciclib +/- Aromatase Inhibitor							
<b>WEEK 4</b> Abemaciclib +/- Aromatase Inhibitor							



# Side Effects of Verzenio (abemaciclib)

- Diarrhea
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Nausea, vomiting
- Headache
- Hair thinning or hair loss
- Rash
- Cough
- Infections
- Low blood counts
  - Decrease in white blood cells that fight infection
  - Decrease in red blood cells that deliver oxygen throughout the body
  - Decrease in platelets that help blood to clot

# Managing Diarrhea

## Diet:

- Eat a bland diet that is easy to digest until diarrhea resolves
- BRAT diet: bananas, rice, applesauce, toast
- Do not eat high fiber foods (raw vegetables/fruits, whole grains, nuts, seeds, beans)
- Do not have dairy, alcohol, caffeine, spicy and fried foods

## Stay Hydrated:

- Drink 8-10 glasses (64-80 ounces) of non-caffeinated, non-carbonated beverages daily
- Gatorade, Pedialyte, or other beverages with electrolytes may be recommended with severe diarrhea

# Medication for Management of Diarrhea

- Imodium (loperamide) is the medication of choice for diarrhea during cancer treatment. It is available over the counter.
- **Instructions for use:**
  - **Take 2 tablets (4mg) with your first loose/watery stool**
  - **Then take 1 tablet (2mg) every 2-4 hours thereafter**
  - **Do not take more than 8 tablets (16mg) in 24 hours without contacting your doctor**
- Contact your care team if you continue to experience diarrhea after taking Imodium for 24 hours
- Refer to <https://www.massgeneral.org/assets/mgh/pdf/cancer-center/breast-cancer/bowel-management.pdf> for more information.

# Verzenio (abemaciclib) May Have Drug Interactions

- Some drugs or supplements should not be taken at the same time as other drugs because they can cause side effects or cause the drug to not work well. This is called a drug interaction.
- Tell your treatment team of **ALL** prescription and over-the-counter medications (this includes vitamins and herbal products)
- Some common drug interactions include:
  - Black Cohosh
  - Ginseng supplements
  - Red Clover
  - St John's Wort
  - Grapefruit, grapefruit juice, pomegranate juice
- Talk with your treatment team or pharmacist before starting any new medications or supplements

# Supportive Care Resources

- Yoga
- Acupuncture / Acupressure
- Massage
- Support groups
- Survivorship programs
- Workshops
- Music therapy, Art therapy
- To learn more about Supportive Care offerings log onto [cancercenterpx.org](https://cancercenterpx.org)

# Storage and Handling of Verzenio (abemaciclib)

- Keep this medicine in its original bottle or separate pill box – do not mix other medications into the pill box.
- Store at room temperature in a dry location away from direct light.
- Keep this medicine out of reach from children and pets.
- Wash your hands before and after handling this medicine.

# Disposal of Verzenio (abemaciclib)

- If you have unused medication, do not throw it in the trash and do not flush it down the sink/toilet.
- You may dispose of this medication by:
  1. Calling your city or county's trash and recycling service for information on hazardous drug take-back programs in your community.
  2. Bringing unused oral targeted therapy to MGH Boston and disposing in the blue drug take-back receptacles located outside of the Main Lobby Yawkey elevators or near the retail pharmacy in the Wang building.
  3. Asking your treatment team or pharmacist for more information.

# Sexuality and Birth Control

- It is fine to be sexually active while receiving Verzenio (abemaciclib).
- **Verzenio (abemaciclib) can harm a developing baby.** You should not get pregnant or get someone pregnant while on Verzenio (abemaciclib).
- Use a reliable birth control during treatment and for at least 3 weeks after receiving the last dose of a Verzenio (abemaciclib).
- Use a protective barrier such as a condom throughout Verzenio (abemaciclib) treatment. This is also to protect your partner from exposure through body fluids.



# Fertility

- Infertility means you cannot become pregnant or make someone pregnant. Infertility can be temporary or permanent.
- Verzenio (abemaciclib) may affect fertility in men. Verzenio (abemaciclib) has not been shown to affect fertility in women.
- Do not breastfeed during treatment and for at least 3 weeks after receiving the last dose of Verzenio (abemaciclib). This is to protect your infant from exposure through breast milk.
- Before starting treatment, talk with your treatment team about your fertility and what you can do.
  - Sperm banking for men and egg harvesting for women may be options before starting treatment.
  - Women can still get pregnant even if their menstrual period changes or stops. **Always use a reliable form of birth control.**

# Your Breast Cancer Team

- Oncologist
- Nurse Practitioner
- Pharmacist
- Oncology Social Worker
- Practice Nurse
- Infusion Nurse

# When to Call

- **Signs of infection:** fever of 100.4 degrees or higher, chills or a very bad sore throat
- **Signs of bleeding:** black, tarry or bloody stool; throwing up blood (may look like coffee grounds)
- **Symptoms of liver problems:** dark urine, yellowing of skin or eyes, loss of appetite, pain on the upper right side of your abdomen
- **Diarrhea:** more than 4 loose bowel movements in a day; diarrhea along with weakness, dizziness, or fever

# Contact Information

## Phone Numbers

- Boston: 617-726-6500
- Waltham: 781-487-6100
- Danvers: 978-882-6060

**Patient Portal:** [patientgateway.org](http://patientgateway.org)



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