Incivek and Victrelis; What's the Difference?

May 22, 2013 By Connie M. Welch

There are differences between Incivek (telaprevir) and Victrelis (boceprevir) in treatment for Hepatitis C, specifically side effects and length of treatment. Information on what is common and differences need to be considered.

What's Common in Both:

1. Both are called protease inhibitors that work effectively in the same way to attack the virus cell, not allowing it to replicate and destroy it. Both are drugs designed to work on Chronic Hepatitis C genotypes 1 (virus strain) with a cure rate over 70%.
2. Both are pills to be taken daily in a timely regiment. Specifically 7 to 9 hours apart.
3. Both are to be taken in combination therapy with Peg Interferon (injection once a week) and Ribavirin (pills taken twice daily).
4. Both have significant drug interactions with common medications, such as statins, which need to be evaluated and monitored.
5. Both have interactions with certain contraceptives and HRT medications that decrease the effectiveness and require dosage of those medications to be monitored and adjusted. Extra precaution should be taken for birth control with the use of all Hep C treatment medications.

In both Protease Inhibitors; Length of treatment will depend on:

1. HCV-RNA (viral load count), SVR (sustained virologic response) meaning if the virus is detected in your blood over a period of time.
2. Condition of your liver.
3. Severity of side effects.

It is important to be proactive and read full information on both medications. Talk to your doctor and ask questions when deciding which one is right for you.The Differences; Treatment Regimen, General Length of Treatment and Side Effects:

1. Incivek is taken the first 12 weeks of treatment only with Peg Interferon and Ribavirin, then discontinued. The course continues with Peg Interferon and Ribavirin until treatment is completed. General length of treatment is between 24 to 48 weeks.
2. Victrelis begins after the first four weeks of starting Peg Interferon and Ribavirin. A viral load test is done after the first four weeks to determine if treatment is effective then Victrelis is added to the therapy and continued throughout the reminder of treatment. General length of treatment is 36 to 48 weeks.
3. Incivek is required to be taken with 20g or more of fat per each dose. The fat binds to the medication and transports it to the virus cell to attack.

4. Victrelis is recommended to be taken with a meal or light snack.

Treatment Side Effects:

Most Common Side Effect of Victrelis (boceprevir) listed from Merck:

Blood problems: Victrelis can affect your bone marrow and cause low red blood cell count and low white blood cell counts. In some cases they may fall to dangerously low levels. If your blood cell count becomes very low, you can get anemia or infections.

If this happens, medication may need to be adjusted, or medication given to stimulate production of red blood cells such as Procrit, or in some cases blood transfusions are needed.

Most Common Side Effects of Victrelis (boceprevir) in combination with Peg Interferon alfa and Ribavirin listed from Merck:

- Tiredness
- Low blood cell count (anemia)
- Nausea
- Headache
- Change in Taste

Most Common Side Effect of Incivek (telaprevir) listed from Vertex:

- Itching
- Rash, with or without itching
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Anal or rectal problems (including hemorrhoids, discomfort, burning, and/or itching around or near the anus)
- Taste Changes
- Tiredness

Most Common Side Effects of Incivek (telaprevir) in combination with Peg Interferon and Ribavirin:

- Itching
- Nausea

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Rectal problems (including hemorrhoids, discomfort, burning, and/or itching around or near the anus)
- Taste Changes
- Tiredness

Common Side Effect of Peg Interferon & Ribavirin:

- Flu-like symptoms
- Fever
- Muscle Aches
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Mood Changes
- Irritability
- Taste Changes
- Deceased Appetite
- Weight Loss
- Rash
- Itching
- Anemia
- Hair thinning
- Insomnia
- Concentration difficulty (also known as Brain Fog)

Important to Note about all Side Effects

It is important to understand, side effects listed by the pharmaceutical companies does not mean you will experience any or all of these, but these have been reported. The good news is you will be closely monitored by your doctor and if you do experience any side effects there are medications to help

alleviate majority of these symptoms.

Make sure to contact your doctor if you experience any side effects to report your condition and get help for relief.

And remember, this is temporary and it will pass. Many patients report side effects cycle out. A good way to look at treatment is, you are in battle and your army (the treatment) is fighting for you, killing the virus and restoring a healthy liver. You can do this!

Do you have a question or comment about Triple Therapy?

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