The Bitter End

How to stomach liquid Norvir

November 1, 1998 By Jeff Hoover

Due to a late-July manufacturing screwup, Abbott Laboratories suspended production of Norvir (ritonavir) capsules and reverted to a widely reviled liquid form (see Gazette, page 31). With no fixed date on the horizon, Norvir takers might face a year or more of dosing with a substance whose taste has been described, charitably, as “cherry-flavored motor oil” or, bluntly, as “the worst-tasting thing ever.”

Although a spoonful of sugar supposedly makes the medicine go down, even Mary Poppins would be stymied by this task. But tips to make the liquid palatable—and prevent the reported side effect of “spontaneous vomiting”—are available. The best advice? Anesthetize the taste buds by any means necessary.

Aggressive strategies include ingesting salty foods prior to dosing, or swallowing a spoonful of chocolate syrup immediately before and after. Fickle drug-takers, especially kids, are encouraged to suck on a pre-dose popsicle.

For those who want to bypass the taste buds altogether, it’s possible to propel the liquid directly into the throat by using a specialized bottle-and-tube apparatus available in medical supply stores. A long straw, angled behind the tongue, may work. Some pharmacies also sell small plastic syringes (no needles) that can be used to squirt liquid far back into your throat. But no guarantees. Liquid Norvir’s foul—and often long-lasting—taste has prompted some to rush to their doctor for
new combinations.

Liquid Norvir should be stored between 68 and 77 degrees Fahrenheit; it is imperative not to refrigerate it under any circumstances. For more info, call Abbott at 800.637.2400 or click to www.norvir.com.

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