



National Tay-Sachs &  
Allied Diseases Association

## Use of miglustat in GM1 and GM2 Gangliosidoses

The following information is for individuals living with rare diseases and their healthcare providers (HCPs) considering off-label use of miglustat for GM1 and GM2 gangliosidoses (Tay-Sachs and Sandhoff diseases). This document is not intended to provide medical advice; individuals interested in using miglustat off-label should discuss this with their HCPs. This information is intended for affected individuals living in the US; the approval status of medications may vary by country. Countries outside of the US may have regulations or processes in place to access medications via off-label drug use (OLDU) as well.

NTSAD does not advocate for or against OLDU of specific drugs for any individuals.

- Background
  - Additional drug names: *N*-butyl-deoxynojirimycin (NB-DNJ); OGT-918 and SC-48334 (compound names during clinical development).
  - Brand names: Zavesca<sup>®</sup>, Brazevas<sup>®</sup>, Opfolda<sup>®</sup>, Yargesa<sup>®</sup>, miglustat, miglustat dipharma, miglustat Gen Orph.
  - Generic name: miglustat. More synonyms:  
<https://go.drugbank.com/drugs/DB00419>;  
<https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/compound/Miglustat>.
  - Mechanism(s) of Action:
  - Miglustat is a type of molecule known as an **iminosugar**—essentially a "sugar mimic," which allows it to bind with various enzymes that usually process sugar. It can work as a **chaperone** to help proteins function better, act as an **anti-inflammatory**, or slow the production of harmful clutter in cells (a process called **substrate reduction therapy, or SRT**). It sometimes interacts with enzymes that aren't meant to be targeted, leading to unintended side effects.
  - Miglustat is best known as a substrate reduction therapy that prevents the accumulation of lysosomal glycosphingolipids (sugar-fats) in lysosomal storage disorders, including GM1 and GM2. By partially inhibiting glucosylceramide (glucocerebroside) synthase, the first committed enzyme in glycosphingolipid production, miglustat achieves a better

balance between lower production and impaired breakdown, reducing storage of these sugar-fats in the lysosomes.

- Less well-known is miglustat's ability to increase glucosylceramide outside of the lysosomes. This helps reduce inflammation in the brain and slow neurodegeneration by preventing new toxic waste from forming.
- **Safety:** Miglustat interferes with the digestion of carbohydrates by inhibiting small intestine enzymes that break down sugars, known as disaccharidases, mainly sucrase and maltase, and, to a lesser extent, isomaltase and lactase. Increased disaccharide levels in the gut lead to poor absorption and the fermentation of undigested disaccharides in the colon, producing common side effects of diarrhea, bloating, flatulence, and weight loss, and, less commonly, abdominal discomfort, nausea, and indigestion. These side effects can be managed by dietary modification (low-carbohydrate diet), anti-diarrhea agents (e.g., loperamide), gradually increasing the medication dose (to improve tolerability), and administration between meals. Gastrointestinal problems generally subside over several weeks with these measures. Miglustat can also cause neurological side effects, including tremor; nerve damage in the arms, legs, hands and feet; unsteady gait/dizziness; and headache. The cause of these neurological side effects is unknown and are managed by reducing the dose or discontinuing miglustat. Mechanisms of action are reviewed in Cox, 2005; Pastores, 2006; Loberto *et al*, 2014; Parenti *et al*, 2014.

- **Approvals and Off-Label Use**

- Zavesca was approved to treat adult patients with mild to moderate type I Gaucher disease (GD1) who cannot receive enzyme replacement therapy, first by EMA (EU) in 2002 and then by FDA (US) in 2003.
  - The main study enrolled 28 patients with mild-to-moderate GD1 who received miglustat 100 mg by mouth three times daily for 12 months. Compared with baseline values, miglustat led to significant reductions in spleen and liver volumes and non-significant increases in hemoglobin concentration and platelet count (Cox *et al*, 2000). In a 24-month extension study, all four endpoints continued to improve (Elstein *et al*, 2004). The most common adverse events were diarrhea, flatulence, and weight loss. Some patients experienced mild, generally reversible, tremor or peripheral neuropathy.
  - A randomized (1:1:1 to miglustat, imiglucerase, or miglustat plus imiglucerase), active-controlled, 6-month switch study evaluated miglustat 100 mg by mouth three times daily as a maintenance

therapy in 36 patients with GD1 who had been receiving Cerezyme® (imiglucerase) for at least 2 years. This was followed by an open-label, 6-month extension study in which all patients received miglustat. After 6 months, there was a significant reduction in platelet count among patients treated with miglustat compared with those treated with imiglucerase. There was a significant decrease in platelet counts from Month 6 to Month 12 in the group that switched from imiglucerase to miglustat, and a continued decrease in platelet counts in the group that continued to receive miglustat alone. (Zavesca prescribing information, 2022)

- Miglustat was approved to treat the neurological manifestations in Niemann-Pick disease type C (NPC), initially by itself (Zavesca) by the EMA (EU) in 2009, and later in combination with arimocloamol (Miplyffa, Zevra Therapeutics) by the FDA in 2024.
  - Miglustat (Opfolda) was approved by the FDA and EMA in 2023 in combination with cipaglucosidase alfa (Pombiliti, Amicus Therapeutics) for the treatment of adults with late-onset Pompe disease who are not improving on current ERT.
  - Miglustat has been used off-label as a monotherapy in several childhood-onset neurodegenerative lysosomal storage disorders, including type III Gaucher disease (GD3), Niemann-Pick disease type C (NPC), Batten disease (juvenile neuronal ceroid lipofuscinosis caused by the *CLN3* gene), and GM1 and GM2 gangliosidoses.
- **Non-clinical Studies in GM2 Gangliosidosis**
    - Miglustat reduces GM2 levels in the *Hexa*<sup>-/-</sup> mouse model of Tay-Sachs disease, a type of GM2 gangliosidosis (Platt *et al*, 1997). However, this mouse model accumulates only a modest amount of GM2 that falls below the threshold for neurodegeneration.
    - A study in the *Hexb*<sup>-/-</sup> mouse model of Sandhoff disease, which does experience neurodegeneration, showed that miglustat reduced GM2 accumulation and modestly delayed neurodegeneration (Jeyakumar *et al*, 1999). Improved motor function and a 40% increase in lifespan were observed when mice were treated in the early pre-symptomatic phase (<6 weeks of age), but not at the late presymptomatic phase (11 weeks of age), suggesting a treatment window after which disease progression is irreversible.
    - A later study in *Hexb*<sup>-/-</sup> mice treated with miglustat showed slowing of glycosphingolipid accumulation in the brain and spine, which delayed the

onset of neuroinflammation and disease development (Jeyakumar *et al*, 2003).

- **Non-clinical Studies in GM1 Gangliosidosis**

- In the  $\beta\text{-gal}^{-/-}$  mouse model of GM1 gangliosidosis treated pre-symptomatically at 3-4 weeks of age, the drug successfully protected the brain and keep the mice physically active, but in this study, the side effects in the gut were too severe for the mice to actually live longer lives.

- **Available Clinical Data in GM2 gangliosidosis**

- A randomized (2:1, miglustat:no miglustat), open-label, multicenter clinical trial evaluated miglustat 300 mg by mouth qd in 30 adults with late-onset Tay-Sachs disease after 12 months, and after a 24-month extension in which all patients received miglustat (Shapiro *et al*, 2012). The primary endpoint, muscle and grip strength, decreased similarly in both groups during the study, and no differences were observed in secondary effectiveness measures of gait, balance, and overall disability. The most common side effects were diarrhea and weight loss.
- Mansouri summarized the experience with miglustat treatment in 54 patients with GM2 gangliosidosis from the medical literature (Mansouri *et al*, 2023). The review included patients with infantile, late-infantile, juvenile, and adult-onset GM2 gangliosidosis who were evaluated in five clinical trials, four case reports, and one case series. No consistent clinical benefit was observed. Interpretation of the results is limited by an insufficient sample size, a short follow-up period, and the short-term survival of infantile patients. The most common side effects of miglustat were gastrointestinal, including diarrhea, weight loss, flatulence, abdominal pain, and nausea/vomiting, and were consistent with the safety profile in GD1.

- **Available Clinical Data in GM1 Gangliosidosis**

- No formal clinical trials of miglustat have been performed in patients with GM1 gangliosidosis. Two small case series have been published (Deodato *et al*, 2017; Fischetto *et al*, 2020).
- Three patients with GM1 gangliosidosis (two juvenile-onset and one adult-onset patient) were treated off-label with a high dose of miglustat (600 mg by mouth daily) at 10-28 years of age and assessed periodically over 3-11 years (Deodato *et al*, 2017). All three had severe neurological impairment at baseline and showed modest, sustained gains with treatment. The two juvenile-onset patients regained the ability to walk a few meters without

assistance and showed increased alertness and vocalization. The adult patient showed improved ambulation (6-minute walk test) and speech fluency.

- Four patients with juvenile-onset GM1 gangliosidosis were treated off-label with miglustat (240 mg to 300 mg PO daily) beginning at 20 months to 10.5 years of age and assessed periodically for 3-7 years (Fischetto *et al*, 2020). Three of the four patients showed stabilization or slowing of neurological disease progression.

- **On-label Recommended Dosing (per Package Insert)**

- Recommendations for Zavesca (miglustat) capsules are available here: [https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda\\_docs/label/2020/021348s0161bl.pdf](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2020/021348s0161bl.pdf). This US prescribing information states that the recommended total daily dose of Zavesca in adults with GD1 is 300 mg, taken by mouth as 100 mg capsules three times a day at regular intervals. In some patients, it may be necessary to reduce the dose to one 100 mg capsule by mouth once or twice daily due to adverse reactions, such as tremor or diarrhea. The starting daily dose is reduced in patients with mild (200 mg) or moderate (100 mg) kidney impairment and is not recommended in patients with severe kidney impairment. Note warnings and precautions for peripheral neuropathy (3%), tremor (30%), diarrhea (85%), and weight loss (65%) in GD1 patients, and reductions in platelet counts (40%) in non-GD indications.
- In Europe, where Zavesca is approved for Niemann-Pick type C, the approved dose is 200 mg by mouth three times daily for patients ages 12 years and over; dosing is based on body surface area for children under 12 years of age.
- In a study of juvenile GM2 gangliosidosis patients, the initial dose of 200 mg by mouth three times a day was better tolerated in younger children with the early-onset juvenile clinical form than in those with the late-juvenile form, who had greater self- and independent dietary choices. In the latter subgroup of late-juvenile GM2 gangliosidosis, the 100 mg by mouth three times a day dose was better tolerated (Maegawa *et al*, 2009).
- The most common adverse reactions (incidence  $\geq 5\%$ ) are: diarrhea, weight loss, stomach pain, gas, nausea, vomiting, and headache, including migraine, tremor, leg cramps, dizziness, weakness, vision problems, low platelet count, muscle cramps, back pain, constipation, dry mouth, heaviness in arms and legs, memory loss, unsteady walking, anorexia, indigestion, a tingling sensation, stomach bloating, stomach pain not related to food, and menstrual changes.

- Zavesca may cause fetal harm based on animal data, and breastfeeding is not recommended while taking Zavesca.

This document provides information and references on miglustat. For general information on off-label drug use, please see our general guidelines document. For information on additional off-label drugs, please see our other drug-specific documents, which are available on NTSAD's website.

This document was organized by the National Tay-Sachs & Allied Diseases Association (NTSAD) Research Committee working group. It was authored by Gerald F. Cox, MD, PhD, from the NTSAD Research Committee with input from other NTSAD Research Committee members and members of the NTSAD Scientific Advisory Committee. It was thoughtfully edited by Karen Grinzaid, MS, CGC, CCRC, to make appropriate for patients.

If you have additional questions, please contact [research@ntsad.org](mailto:research@ntsad.org).

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