Recommended HIV Treatment Regimens

When I start treatment, what kinds of medications will I need to take?

Anti-HIV medications are used to control the reproduction of the virus and to slow the progression of HIV disease. Anti-HIV medications are also called **antiretroviral** medications. There are four classes of FDA-approved antiretroviral medications: NRTIs, NNRTIs, PIs, and fusion inhibitors. **Approved Anti-HIV Medications Fact Sheet** lists the FDA-approved antiretroviral medications by class.

How many medications will I need to take?

The recommended treatment for HIV is a combination of three or more medications in a regimen called **H**ighly **A**ctive **A**ntiretroviral **T**herapy (HAART). How many pills you will need to take and how often you will take them depends on what medications you and your doctor choose.

Which medications should I take?

Each HAART regimen is tailored to the individual patient – there is no one "best" regimen. You and your doctor will decide which medications are right for you. For people taking HAART for the first time, the recommended regimens are:

- Sustiva + Epivir + (Retrovir or Viread or Zerit)
- Kaletra + Epivir + (Retrovir or Zerit)

Are there any other treatment regimens?

Some people may benefit from a different regimen. Recommended alternative regimens are:

- Sustiva + Emtriva + (Retrovir or Viread or Zerit)
- Sustiva + Videx + (Epivir or Emtriva)
- Viramune + (Epivir or Emtriva) + (Retrovir or Zerit or Videx)
- Agenerase + low dose Norvir + (Epivir or Emtriva) + (Retrovir or Zerit)
- Reyataz + (Epivir or Emtriva) + (Retrovir or Zerit)
- Crixivan + (Epivir or Emtriva) + (Retrovir or Zerit)
- Crixivan + low dose Norvir + (Epivir or Emtriva) + (Retrovir or Zerit)
- Kaletra + Emtriva + (Retrovir or Zerit)
- Viracept + (Epivir or Emtriva) + (Retrovir or Zerit)
- (Fortovase or Invirase) + low dose Norvir + (Epivir or Emtriva) + (Retrovir or Zerit)

Terms Used in This Fact Sheet:

Antiretroviral: *a medication that interferes with replication of retroviruses. HIV is a retrovirus.*

Drug toxicity: *the harm a medication can do to your body.*

Viral load: *the amount of HIV in a sample of blood.*

In general, taking only one or two drugs is not recommended because any decrease in **viral load** is almost always temporary without three or more drugs. The exception is the recommendation for pregnant women, who may take Retrovir alone or with other drugs to reduce the risk of passing HIV to their infants.

If you are pregnant or considering becoming pregnant, there are additional treatment considerations. **HIV and Pregnancy Fact Sheet** has more information on HIV treatment and pregnancy.

What are some of the negative side effects of HAART?

You may experience negative side effects (**drug toxicity**) when you take HIV drugs. Some of these side effects are serious, even life-threatening; you may have to change drugs due to intolerable side effects. You and your doctor or pharmacist should discuss the side effects of each medication.

Possible side effects of HAART include:

- liver problems
- diabetes
- abnormal fat distribution (lipodystrophy syndrome)
- high cholesterol
- increased bleeding in patients with hemophilia
- decreased bone density
- skin rash
- pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas)
- nerve problems

Side effects that may seem minor, such as fever, nausea, and fatigue, can mean there are serious problems. Always discuss any side effects you are having with your doctor.

For more information:

Contact your doctor or an *AIDSinfo* Health Information Specialist at 1–800–448–0440 or **http://aidsinfo.nih.gov.**

This information is based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' *Guidelines for the Use of Antiretroviral Agents in HIV-Infected Adults and Adolescents* (available at **http://aidsinfo.nih.gov**).

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