

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. They are also called **antiretroviral** medications. There are six classes of FDA-approved antiretroviral medications: NRTIs, NNRTIs, PIs, entry inhibitors, fusion inhibitors, and integrase inhibitors. The [Approved Medications to Treat HIV Infection Fact Sheet](#) lists the FDA-approved antiretroviral medications by class. It also gives other names for the medications and the date they were approved by the FDA.

How many medications will I need to take?

The recommended treatment for HIV is a combination of three or more medications from different classes in a regimen called **Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy** (HAART). How many pills you will need to take and how often you will take them will depend on what medications you and your doctor choose. Some of the medications are combinations of two or more different anti-HIV medications from one or more classes.

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 (in alphabetical order) are:

Atripla*
Kaletra + Truvada**
Lexiva + Norvir + Truvada
Prezista + Norvir + Truvada
Reyataz + Norvir + Truvada
Sustiva* + Truvada

* Do not use if planning on becoming pregnant or in the first trimester of pregnancy

** Do not use once-daily Kaletra in pregnant women

Are there any other treatment regimens?

Yes, there are several other regimens. Some people may benefit from a regimen other than those listed above. You and your doctor will select a regimen based on your particular needs (see [Starting Anti-HIV Medications Fact Sheet](#)). In general, taking medications from only one class is not recommended because any decrease in **viral load** is almost always temporary.

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.

If you are pregnant or considering becoming pregnant, there are additional treatment considerations. The [HIV During Pregnancy, Labor and Delivery, and After Birth Fact Sheet Series](#) has more information on HIV treatment and pregnancy.

What are some of the negative side effects of HAART?

You may experience negative side effects when you take anti-HIV medications. Some of these side effects and/or **drug toxicities** are serious, even life-threatening; you may have to change medications due to intolerable side effects (see [Side Effects of Anti-HIV Medications Fact Sheet Series](#)). You and your doctor or pharmacist should discuss the side effects of each medication.

Possible side effects of HAART include:

- liver problems – see [Hepatotoxicity Fact Sheet](#)
- diabetes – see [Hyperglycemia Fact Sheet](#)
- high cholesterol – see [Hyperlipidemia Fact Sheet](#)
- high levels of lactate in the blood – see [Lactic Acidosis Fact Sheet](#)
- abnormal fat distribution (lipodystrophy syndrome) – see [Lipodystrophy Fact Sheet](#)
- decreased bone density – see [Osteonecrosis, Osteopenia, and Osteoporosis Fact Sheet](#)
- skin rash – see [Skin Rash Fact Sheet](#)
- pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas)
- nerve problems
- increased bleeding in patients with hemophilia

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>.