

Recommended HIV Treatment Regimens

What is the treatment for HIV?

Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is the recommended treatment for HIV. ART involves taking a combination of anti-HIV medications (a **regimen**) every day. Anti-HIV medications (also called **antiretrovirals**) are grouped into six **drug classes** according to how they fight HIV. The six classes are non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs), nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs), protease inhibitors (PIs), fusion inhibitors, CCR5 antagonists, and integrase inhibitors.

Recommended HIV treatment regimens include three or more anti-HIV medications from at least two different drug classes. Taking a combination of anti-HIV medications from different classes is the most effective way to control the virus. Some anti-HIV medications are available in combination (two or more medications in one pill).

Anti-HIV medications are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). See the [FDA-Approved Anti-HIV Medications](#) fact sheet for a complete list of medications used in HIV treatment regimens in the United States.

How will I know which anti-HIV medications to take?

The best combination of anti-HIV medications for you depends on your individual needs. Factors that you and your health care provider will consider when selecting your HIV regimen include:

- Other diseases or conditions you may have
- Possible side effects of anti-HIV medications
- The risk of interactions between anti-HIV medications and other medications you take
- Results of **drug-resistance testing** and other tests
- Convenience of the regimen. (For example, a regimen that involves taking only one pill a day is convenient to follow.)
- Any personal issues that can make following a regimen difficult (such as depression or alcohol or drug abuse)

What are the recommended regimens for people taking anti-HIV medications for the first time?

After considering your individual needs, you and your health care provider may select one of the following regimens

recommended for people taking anti-HIV medications for the first time:

- **Atripla** (a combination of three anti-HIV medications in one pill)
- **Reyataz + Norvir + Truvada** (Truvada is a combination of two anti-HIV medications in one pill.)
- **Prezista + Norvir + Truvada**
- **Isentress + Truvada**

Terms Used in This Fact Sheet:

Antiretroviral: A medication that prevents a retrovirus, such as HIV, from making copies of itself. Anti-HIV medications are also called antiretrovirals.

Antiretroviral therapy (ART): The recommended treatment for HIV. ART involves taking a combination of three or more anti-HIV medications from at least two different drug classes every day to control the virus.

Atripla: A combination of three anti-HIV medications in one pill—Sustiva (also called efavirenz or EFV), Emtriva (also called emtricitabine or FTC), and Viread (also called tenofovir or TDF).

Drug class: A group of medications that work in the same way.

Drug-resistance testing: Testing to identify which anti-HIV medications will or will not be effective against a person's specific strain of HIV. Drug-resistance testing is done using a sample of blood.

Isentress: An anti-HIV medication in the integrase inhibitor class. Isentress is also called raltegravir or RAL.

Norvir: An anti-HIV medication in the protease inhibitor (PI) class. Norvir is also called ritonavir or RTV.

Prezista: An anti-HIV medication in the protease inhibitor (PI) class. Prezista is also called darunavir or DRV.

Regimen: A combination of three or more anti-HIV medications from at least two different drug classes.

Reyataz: An anti-HIV medication in the protease inhibitor (PI) class. Reyataz is also called atazanavir or ATV.

Sustiva: An anti-HIV medication in the non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NNRTI) class. Sustiva is also called efavirenz or EFV.

Truvada: Two anti-HIV medications from the nucleoside reverse transcriptase (NRTI) class—Emtriva and Viread—combined in a single pill. Emtriva is also called emtricitabine or FTC. Viread is also called tenofovir or TDF.

Women who are planning on becoming pregnant or are in the first trimester of pregnancy should not use Atripla or **Sustiva**. (Sustiva, which is one of the medications in Atripla, may cause birth defects that develop during the first few months of pregnancy.) If you are pregnant or expect to become pregnant soon, talk to your health care provider about the benefits and risks of taking anti-HIV medications. (See the [HIV and Pregnancy](#) fact sheet series for information on HIV treatment regimens for pregnant women.)

Because individual needs vary, these recommended HIV treatment regimens may not be right for everyone. If none of the preferred regimens is right for you, your health care provider will help you select an alternative regimen based on your needs.

Will I have side effects from the anti-HIV medications in my regimen?

Anti-HIV medications can cause side effects. Side effects vary depending on the anti-HIV medication. And people taking the same medication may not have the same side effects. Before starting treatment, discuss possible side effects with your health care provider or pharmacist.

Most side effects from anti-HIV medications are manageable. However, side effects that become unbearable or life threatening call for a change in medications. Side effects that may seem minor, such as fever, nausea, fatigue, or rash, can indicate serious problems. Once you start treatment, always discuss any side effects from your anti-HIV medications with your health care provider.

Interactions between anti-HIV medications and other medications can increase the risk of side effects. Drug interactions can also reduce the effectiveness of anti-HIV medications. (Anti-HIV medications can also have the same effect on other medications.) Always tell your health care provider about other medications you take, including when you switch or stop taking a medication.

For more information:

Contact an *AIDSinfo* health information specialist at 1–800–448–0440 or visit <http://aidsinfo.nih.gov>. See your health care provider for medical advice.