



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Lamivudine

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

### **Brand Names: US**

Epivir; Epivir HBV

### **Brand Names: Canada**

3TC; APO-LamiVUDine; APO-LamiVUDine HBV; Heptovir

### **Warning**

#### **All products:**

- Hepatitis B has gotten worse when this drug was stopped in some people with hepatitis B. Close follow-up for a few months is needed when therapy is stopped in people who have hepatitis B. Do not stop taking this drug without calling your doctor.
- There is more than 1 brand of this drug. One brand cannot safely be used for the other. The doctor will tell you about any needed change.

### **Epivir-HBV:**

- Do not take this brand of this drug if you have HIV infection. The dose of this brand is not enough and HIV may be harder to treat after taking it. HIV testing needs to be done before taking this brand. Talk with your doctor.

### **What is this drug used for?**

- It is used to treat hepatitis B infection.
- It is used to treat HIV infection.

### **What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?**

- If you have an allergy to lamivudine or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you are taking another drug that has the same drug in it.
- If you are taking emtricitabine.
- If you are taking a drug that has sorbitol in it.
- If you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to

take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

## **What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?**

### **All products:**

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug does not stop the spread of diseases like HIV or hepatitis that are passed through blood or having sex. Do not have any kind of sex without using a latex or polyurethane condom. Do not share needles or other things like toothbrushes or razors.
- Rarely, this drug may cause a swollen liver and a buildup of acid in the blood. Sometimes, this may be deadly. The risk may be higher in women, in overweight people, and in people who have taken drugs like this one for a long time.
- A pancreas problem (pancreatitis) has happened in children taking lamivudine with or without other HIV drugs. Sometimes this has been deadly. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- If giving this drug to your child and your child's weight

changes, talk with the doctor. The dose of this drug may need to be changed.

- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan on getting pregnant. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks of using this drug while you are pregnant.

### **All liquid products:**

- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes), talk with the doctor. Some of these products have sugar.

### **Treating HIV infection:**

- If you have HIV and hepatitis B, the hepatitis b virus can change while you take this drug. If this happens, the hepatitis B virus may be harder to treat. Talk with your doctor.
- Use this drug with care in children. They may have more side effects. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug is not a cure for HIV. Stay under the care of your doctor.
- When able to, it is best to take the tablet form of this drug. The liquid form of this drug did not work as well in children taking other liquid HIV drugs as it did in children taking the tablet form. Talk with your doctor.

### **Hepatitis B infection:**

- Tell your doctor if you have never had hepatitis care before.

- This drug is not a cure for hepatitis infection. Stay under the care of your doctor.

## **What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?**

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

### **For all uses of this drug:**

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of too much lactic acid in the blood (lactic acidosis) like fast breathing, fast heartbeat, a heartbeat that does not feel normal, very bad upset stomach or throwing up, feeling very sleepy, shortness of breath, feeling very tired or weak, very bad dizziness, feeling cold, or muscle pain or cramps.
- Signs of a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach

or throwing up.

- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Low mood (depression).

### **Treating HIV infection:**

- Changes in your immune system can happen when you start taking drugs to treat HIV. If you have an infection that you did not know you had, it may show up when you take this drug. Tell your doctor right away if you have any new signs after you start this drug, even after taking it for several months. This includes signs of infection like fever, sore throat, weakness, cough, or shortness of breath.

### **What are some other side effects of this drug?**

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Headache.
- Upset stomach.
- Diarrhea.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Dizziness.
- Nose or throat irritation.
- Ear irritation.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

### **How is this drug best taken?**

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

### **All products:**

- Take with or without food.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.
- It is important that you do not miss or skip a dose of this drug during treatment.

### **All liquid products:**

- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

### **What do I do if I miss a dose?**

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

- If you are not sure what to do if you miss a dose, call your doctor.

## **How do I store and/or throw out this drug?**

### **All products:**

- Store at room temperature.
- Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

### **All liquid products:**

- Keep lid tightly closed.

### **General drug facts**

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.



- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

## **Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer**

This information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

## **Last Reviewed Date**

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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