



The Information Exchange

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LAMIVUDINE (Epivir®)

Please read this factsheet carefully together with the patient information leaflet before taking your medicine. If you have any questions or are unsure about anything, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Lamivudine, also known as **3TC** or **Epivir** belongs to a class of drugs called **nucleoside analogues** or **nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs)**. NRTIs are used for the treatment of HIV infection, in combination with other anti-HIV drugs. Please speak to your clinic doctor or pharmacist if you would like more information about how these drugs work.

Before taking lamivudine

Tell your doctor about:

- All other drugs that you are taking including any that you buy over the counter in a community pharmacy and herbal medicines
- Any previous allergy to any other medicine
- If you have ever had any liver disease
- If you have ever had any kidney disease

Taking your lamivudine

- Lamivudine is available in two strengths, as a white diamond shaped tablet with "GX CJ7" written on one side, containing 150mg of lamivudine and as a light grey diamond shaped tablet with "GX E7J" written on one side, containing 300mg of lamivudine. There is also a liquid formulation containing 10mg per ml.
- Combivir, Kivexa and Trizivir are combined pill preparations that also contain lamivudine. For more information please read the separate drug fact sheets.
- The doses should be spaced evenly throughout the day. If you are taking lamivudine twice daily try to take the doses as close as possible to twelve hours apart, and at the same times each day. If you are taking lamivudine once daily, try taking the dose as close to twenty-four hours apart as possible, at the same time each day.
- There is no effect of food upon the absorption therefore you can take the tablets before, with or after food.
- Lamivudine works best if there is a constant amount in your bloodstream. It is therefore very important to take the tablets regularly. If you forget a dose take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose anyway, forget about the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose..

Do not run out of lamivudine. If you are going on holiday and need additional supplies, tell your doctor. Your pharmacist will check that you have enough to last you until your next appointment.

Other drugs and Lamivudine

Lamivudine should not be used in combination with emtricitabine (FTC)

Side effects

Lamivudine, like all other medicines, has some side effects. The most common ones affecting more than 1 in every 100 patients are:

- Headache
- Tiredness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Rash
- Diarrhoea
- Abdominal pain or cramps
- Insomnia
- Cough
- Alopecia

Many of these side-effects are transient and will usually disappear a few weeks after starting lamivudine. If you experience any of these side effects or any other new symptoms after you start lamivudine, tell your doctor who will advise you what to do. Do NOT stop taking your lamivudine without consulting your doctor first. It is important that you tell your doctor so that he or she can discuss other treatment options with you.

Lactic acidosis, a chemical disturbance in the blood, has been reported with the use of nucleoside analogues. Inform your doctor if you experience the following symptoms: nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, weight loss, rapid, deep breathing or muscle weakness.

Admission to hospital

If you are admitted to hospital please bring all your medicines with you. This is so the nurses can continue to give them to you on the ward. This is especially important for anti-HIV medications as they need to be taken regularly.

Storing your lamivudine

Lamivudine tablets should be stored at room temperature.