



plain and simple facts

# DRUG INFORMATION



## 3TC (lamivudine, Epivir)

### Why am I given 3TC as my medication?

- 3TC (also called lamivudine or Epivir) is a drug that is used in combination with other drugs to treat HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection.
- 3TC is also part of the anti-HIV drugs Combivir and Trizivir.
- 3TC blocks a protein called “reverse transcriptase.” As a result, it belongs to a class of drugs called Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors (RTIs). The HIV virus needs this protein to reproduce itself, so by blocking it the drug helps slow down HIV disease.
- Taking this medication can reduce the amount of virus in your body. It can also reduce your chance of getting sick from AIDS-related illnesses, help you stay healthy longer or get your health back. It may also reduce the damage to your immune system.

### How do I take this medication?

- 3TC comes in 150 mg tablets and in liquid form (10 mg/ml).
- 3TC is usually taken as 150 mg twice daily. If you have a kidney problem, your dose may be changed.
- 3TC can be taken with or without food.
- 3TC liquid contains sugar, so you should clean your teeth regularly after taking the medication to prevent tooth decay. If you are diabetic, taking the 3TC liquid may affect your blood sugar.
- 3TC should be stored at room temperature in a dry place. 3TC liquid should be kept at temperature below 25 degrees Celsius. Don't put the medicine in the bathroom or kitchen, as moisture may cause the medicine to lose its effectiveness.
- Keep it out of reach of children.

### What if I forget to take a dose?

- Take the dose you missed as soon as possible. However, if it is within 2 hours of your next dose, just continue with your regular schedule. Do not double the dose.
- Recent studies have found that for the anti-HIV medications to work, all the medications need to be taken regularly and consistently. Missing or skipping doses of your medication may make it lose its effectiveness as the virus can change itself and become resistant to the medication.

### What are the side effects of 3TC?

- Most of the side effects of 3TC are mild and uncommon. The side effects may include:  
~ headache

- ~ stomach upset
- ~ diarrhea
- ~ fever
- ~ rash
- ~ fatigue
- ~ hair loss
- ~ numbness or tingling in the hands and feet

- If you are experiencing side effects from the medication, call your doctor or pharmacist to discuss your symptoms.
- Do not stop the medication or change your dose before you talk to your doctor or pharmacist. They may have suggestions of how you can manage the side effects without stopping the medication.
- Very rarely, 3TC may cause a decrease in your white blood cells (which can increase the risk for bacterial infection), platelets (which can increase the risk for bleeding) or red blood cells (which can make you feel tired and short of breath).
- In children, 3TC may rarely cause pancreatitis. The symptoms include sudden sharp abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting. If these symptoms occur, contact your doctor right away.

### **Can I take 3TC with other medications?**

- 3TC can interact with other drugs. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the prescription and non-prescription medications (including vitamins and herbs) that you are taking.

### **Can I take 3TC with alcohol or street drugs?**

- In general, it is advisable to avoid excessive amounts of alcohol and street drugs while you are taking anti-HIV medications.
- Alcohol may interact with some of your medications. Do not skip a dose of your medication because you want a drink.

### **Can I take 3TC if I am pregnant or breast-feeding?**

- If you are pregnant and wish to take 3TC, please consult your doctor about taking medication.
- Since the HIV virus can be transmitted through breast milk, breast-feeding is not recommended in HIV-positive women.

### **What other precautions do I need to know when taking 3TC?**

- 3TC may affect your kidneys. Though this is rare, keep your appointments with your physician for blood tests to check your liver and kidney function regularly.
- Make sure you have a continuous supply of the medication.
- If you have a kidney problem, make sure your doctor knows that before starting you on 3TC.
- 3TC does not kill the virus or cure AIDS. It also does not prevent the transmission of HIV, so please remember to always take precautions if you are having sex (use latex condoms) or using drugs (use clean syringes).



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**Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV-related illness and the treatments in question.**



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