

# COVID-19 is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation.

Get the latest public health information from CDC: <https://www.coronavirus.gov>

Get the latest research information from NIH: <https://www.nih.gov/coronavirus>



## Side Effects of HIV Medicines

---

### HIV and Hepatotoxicity

Last Reviewed: September 6, 2019

#### Key Points

- Hepatotoxicity is the medical term for damage to the liver caused by a medicine, chemical, or herbal or dietary supplement. Hepatotoxicity can be a side effect of some HIV medicines.
- Symptoms of hepatotoxicity can include rash, stomach pain, nausea and vomiting, fatigue, dark-colored urine, light-colored bowel movements, jaundice (yellow skin and eyes), loss of appetite, and fever.
- People taking HIV medicines that may cause hepatotoxicity should know about the possible symptoms of hepatotoxicity. In some cases, hepatotoxicity can be life-threatening.
- HIV medicines that are causing serious, life-threatening hepatotoxicity must be stopped immediately. However, a person should never stop taking an HIV medicine unless their health care provider tells them to.

### What is hepatotoxicity?

Hepatotoxicity is the medical term for damage to the liver caused by a medicine, chemical, or herbal or dietary supplement. Hepatotoxicity can be a side effect of some HIV medicines.

Use the AIDSinfo [Drug Database](#) to find information about a specific HIV medicine, including information about its potential side effects.

## Are there other factors that can increase the risk of hepatotoxicity?

The following factors may increase the risk of hepatotoxicity due to HIV medicines:

- Also having [hepatitis B virus \(HBV\) infection](#) and/or [hepatitis C virus \(HCV\) infection](#)
- Taking other medicines that can cause liver damage
- Alcohol use
- Pre-existing liver damage

## What are the symptoms of hepatotoxicity?

Symptoms of hepatotoxicity include the following:

- Rash
- Stomach pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fatigue
- Dark-colored urine
- Light-colored bowel movements
- Jaundice (yellow skin and eyes)
- Loss of appetite
- Fever

People taking HIV medicines that may cause hepatotoxicity should know about these symptoms. In some cases, hepatotoxicity can be life-threatening. If you have any of these symptoms, contact your health care provider.

## Are there tests to determine whether I am at risk for developing hepatotoxicity from HIV medicines?

Before starting HIV medicines, people with HIV have several lab tests done. These include blood tests to check for liver damage and for HBV and HCV infection. If the test results and other information shows that the person is at risk for developing hepatotoxicity, they can avoid HIV medicines that may cause hepatotoxicity.

## How is hepatotoxicity treated?

Once a person starts taking HIV medicines, they are monitored for signs of hepatotoxicity. HIV medicines that are causing serious, life-threatening hepatotoxicity must be stopped immediately. However, a person should never stop taking an HIV medicine unless their health care provider tells them to.

Choosing an HIV medicine to replace one that is causing hepatotoxicity will depend on a person's individual needs. Fortunately, there are many HIV medicines available to include in an HIV regimen.

If you are taking or plan to take HIV medicines, talk to your health care provider about the risk of hepatotoxicity.

## **This fact sheet is based on information from the following sources:**

- From the Department of Health and Human Services: Guidelines for the Use of Antiretroviral Agents in Adults and Adolescents with HIV: [Adverse Effects of Antiretroviral Agents](#) and [Laboratory Testing](#)
- From MedlinePlus: [Drug-Induced Liver Injury](#)
- From the National Institutes of Health: [LiverTox: Glossary](#)
- From the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: [Primary Care of Veterans with HIV](#)