

HIV treatments information

abacavir + lamivudine

Kivexa contains two nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs) - 300mg lamivudine (3TC) and 600mg abacavir.

About 5 in every 100 patients who are treated with Kivexa develop a hypersensitivity reaction to the active ingredient abacavir.

Studies have shown that Kivexa is as effective as its constituent drugs taken separately in treatment-experienced patients. It can also be used as a first-line therapy.

About this treatment

Generic name:	abacavir + lamivudine
Brand name:	Kivexa
Also known as:	Epzicom
Drug class:	double NRTI
Availability in Australia:	

- **Available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)** through [S100 prescribers](#).
- This drug may be available through clinical trials in Australia.
- You may be able to import this drug from overseas for your personal use.

Presentation: 600mg/300mg tablet

What the [treatment guidelines](#) say:

The Guidelines note that the abacavir in Kivexa can cause a potentially fatal hypersensitivity reaction.

Symptoms of hypersensitivity may include fever, rash, nausea, vomiting, malaise or fatigue, loss of appetite, and/or respiratory symptoms such as sore throat, cough, shortness of breath.

Kivexa may also cause a rare but potentially life-threatening toxicity called lactic acidosis with hepatic steatosis.

It is not recommended for people who test positive for the gene HLA-B*5701.

Kivexa should be used with caution if HIV RNA is greater than 100,000 copies/mL or if you have a high risk for cardiovascular disease. This drug is not recommended for use in pregnancy. It should not be used by people under 13 years old or people with a damaged liver.

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From the NAPWA website at <http://www.napwa.org.au/rx/double-nrti/abacavir-lamivudine>

Links:

- <http://www.aidsmap.com/cms1315524.aspx>
- <http://www.pbs.gov.au/html/consumer/search/results?term=Kivexa&scope=PBS+STATIC&form-type=simple>
- <http://www.thebody.com/content/art6039.html>

Taking it

Like all anti-HIV drugs, abacavir + lamivudine must be taken in combination with other drugs to be completely effective. Your doctor will advise you on the right combination of drugs to suit your circumstances.

Dosage

The normal adult dose is one 300/600mg tablet once a day.

This drug is not recommended for use in pregnancy.

Regardless of what you read on this website or elsewhere, you should always take your medications according to your doctor's instructions. If you're unsure, speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

With or without food?

Abacavir + lamivudine may be taken with or without food.

Side effects

All drugs can produce side effects in some people. These may be mild, moderate or severe, so you should be aware of potential side effects before starting any drug, and speak to your doctor if you experience side effects that concern you.

- **Common side effects** may include nausea (upset stomach, feeling sick to the stomach), diarrhoea, vomiting, headache, fatigue, dizziness, muscle pain, abdominal pain, peripheral neuropathy, insomnia.
- **Less common side effects** may include rash, blood disorders, muscle damage, neutropenia, hair loss.
- **Rare side effects** may include serious hypersensitivity reaction which may be life-threatening, lactic acidosis with hepatic steatosis.

It's unlikely you will experience all of these side effects, and you may not experience any side effects at all. Before starting any new drug, ask your doctor about side effects you might experience and discuss strategies for dealing with side effects if they do occur. If you experience any significant side effect you should continue taking your medicine and see your doctor as soon as possible.

Interactions with other drugs

Potential drug interactions may be the same as those for abacavir and 3TC. Monitor if also using methadone. Alcohol may increase blood levels of abacavir. 3TC should not be taken with intravenous foscarnet (Foscavir) or ganciclovir (Cymevene). If on hepatitis C treatments, monitor for liver problems.

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