

PHARMACY

Drug Information

Oral Medications to Treat Hepatitis B



What Is Hepatitis B?

- Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by infection of hepatitis B virus (HBV), resulting in liver inflammation. It can cause both acute (short-term) and chronic (long-term) disease.

How Is Hepatitis B Transmitted?

- Hepatitis B is transmitted by direct contact with blood or body fluids of an infected person. This can occur through sexual contact with an infected person or sharing of needles, syringes, other drug-injection equipment or cutting instruments. It can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby at birth.

Common Symptoms and Signs of Hepatitis B

Acute Hepatitis B	Chronic Hepatitis B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jaundice (yellowing of the skin or white parts of eye) • Dark-coloured urine • Extreme fatigue • Poor appetite • Nausea and vomiting • Abdominal pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms often do not show till the late stages, when jaundice, abdominal pain and leg swelling become more obvious

How Is Hepatitis B Treated?

- Treatment for hepatitis B does not cure hepatitis B. It helps to delay or prevent complications such as liver inflammation, liver cirrhosis (scarring) and liver cancer from developing. One available treatment is oral anti-viral medications known as Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors (NRTIs).
- The goal of treatment in hepatitis B is to suppress or reduce the activity of HBV. This lowers painful swelling of the liver and reduces the risk of liver fibrosis (excessive amount of scar tissue).
- In general, the treatment prevents acute attacks and complications, as well as improves the quality of life for the individual.

What Are the Oral Medications Used to Treat Hepatitis B?

Medication Class	Medication Name	Mode Of Action
Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitor (NRTIs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lamivudine (Zeffix) Adefovir (Hepsera) Entecavir (Baraclude) Telbivudine (Sebivo) Tenofovir Disoproxyl Fumarate (Viread) Tenofovir Alafenamide (Vemlidy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop hepatitis B virus (HBV) from increasing in the body.

How Are the Medications Administered / Taken?

- Lamivudine, Adefovir, Telbivudine and Tenofovir may be taken with or without food. Entecavir should be taken on an empty stomach (one hour before or two hours after food).
- Take it at the same time each day to maintain a steady amount of the medication in your blood.
- It is important that you take the medication regularly to lower the risk of drug resistance. To clear the HBV infection in your body, do not miss any dose. The duration of medication depends on how well your body responds to the medication.
- If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, take only the usual dose. Never take a double dosage to make up for the missed dose.

Can Hepatitis B Medications Be Administered / Taken with Other Medications?

- It is important that you inform the doctor or pharmacist about other medications that you are currently taking, as they might not work well with the medications for hepatitis B treatment. Other medications include over-the-counter medications, supplements and traditional/herbal remedies.

What Are the Important Side Effects of Hepatitis B Medications?

- While harmful side effects are rare, you may experience some common side effects, such as:

Side Effects	Medication Name	Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headache Tiredness Nausea and vomiting Diarrhoea Abdominal pain Insomnia Dizziness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lamivudine (Zeffix) Tenofovir Disoproxyl Fumarate (Viread) Tenofovir Alafenamide (Vemlidy) 	These symptoms may get better after some time. Inform your doctor if the symptoms do not get better.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe abdominal pain and persistent nausea or vomiting Frequent & persistent flu-like symptoms (high fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat) 		Inform your doctor immediately.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headache Tiredness Nausea and vomiting Diarrhoea Abdominal pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adefovir (Hepsera) 	These symptoms may get better after some time. Inform your doctor if the symptoms do not get better.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headache Tiredness Stomach upset Dizziness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entecavir (Baraclude) 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headache • Tiredness • Diarrhoea • Insomnia • Dizziness • Abdominal pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telbivudine (Sebivo) 	<p>These symptoms may get better after some time. Inform your doctor if the symptoms do not get better.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme tiredness • Breathing difficulties • Severe stomach pain with nausea or vomiting • Cold hands and feet • Fast or irregular heartbeat • Muscle pain or cramps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All medications 	<p>These may be possible signs of lactic acidosis (condition where there is build-up of acid in the bloodstream).</p> <p>Inform your doctor immediately.</p>

Consult your doctor if you experience any other unusual symptoms.

If you develop rashes, facial swelling or shortness of breath after taking the medication, you could be allergic to the medication. Please seek medical attention immediately.

Do I Need Regular Check-Ups When Taking These Medications?

- Your doctor will arrange for you to visit them regularly for check-ups. Blood tests are required sometimes to check your liver function and components of your blood.

Are There Any Special Precautions That I Need to Take?

- Continue treatment unless your doctor advises otherwise.
- Even when taking this medication, you can still spread hepatitis B to others through sexual contact, perinatal contact (mother to child during pregnancy) and parenteral route (e.g. sharing of needles).
- Hepatitis B vaccinations are recommended for family members or sexual partners who are likely to come in contact with the virus. Seek advice from your doctor on the vaccinations required.
- Avoid alcohol. Alcohol, when taken together with the medication, can increase the risk of liver problems.
- Please inform your doctor if you plan to conceive, if you are pregnant and/or intend to breastfeed.

How Do I Store These Medications?

- Store your medication in a cool, dry place away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight.

If you have any problem with your treatment, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician.

Please keep all medications out of reach of children.

