

Easy B Facts

What Are Antivirals?

If your liver is damaged by hepatitis B (HBV), your doctor may treat you with an antiviral medicine to stop HBV from making more copies of itself (replicating). Unfortunately, antivirals stop HBV from replicating for only as long as you are taking hepatitis B medications.

HBV can also become resistant – that is the virus can mutate and escape from a particular medication over time. If this happens your doctor may switch you to a different antiviral or add a second one to your treatment. There is no cure for HBV, but the drugs can keep you healthy.

Below are the 5 antivirals approved to treat HBV. They are pills that are taken daily. All of them appear to be safe and cause few side effects, but some cause less viral resistance than others.

If you have never been treated, doctors suggest one of these three antivirals:

Tenofovir alafenamide (Vemlidy) is a newer form of tenofovir that is as effective and safer than tenofovir. It was approved to treat chronic hepatitis B in 2016.

Tenofovir (Viread) can make the hepatitis B virus counts go to zero while taking it. So far the drug resistance rates of tenofovir are zero.

Entecavir (Baraclude) can make the hepatitis B virus count go down to zero while taking it. The drug has a rare chance (about 1%) of developing drug resistance.

The following two antivirals cause higher rates of resistance and should be avoided if you are being treated for the first time:

Adefovir (Hepsera) About 1/3 of people who take adefovir develop drug resistance.

Lamivudine (Epivir-HBV) has a very high rate of drug resistance.



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