

SIDE EFFECTS OF MEDICINES AND ARVs

All medicines, including Antiretrovirals (ARVs), can have side effects. ARV side effects can be mild or serious but most can be managed.

ANTI-RETROVIRALS (ARVs): medicines which lower the level of HIV in your blood, and help you live a healthier life if taken everyday, for life. They do not cure HIV/AIDS.



I started with d4T, 3TC and Efavirenz. A few months later I started having strange dreams, mood swings and was easily frightened. My doctor explained that some people get this side effect from Efavirenz. I stayed on the d4T and 3TC and switched Efavirenz with Nevirapine. Since then I have not had problems with my treatment.
-Zoliswa Magwentshu

ARV side effects can include anemia, nausea, skin rash, liver problems or numb/painful feet (called Peripheral Neuropathy) depending which combination you take. If you take Nevirapine, an ALT or Liver Function Test should be done especially for the first two months to check for liver problems.

Report side effects of all medicines, including herbal and traditional medicines, at your clinic immediately. If using traditional or herbal medicines at the same time as ARVs, it may be hard to tell which is causing the side effects.

Misinformation and fear makes some people panic when problems occur while they take ARVs. Understanding possible side effects and other problems before starting your treatment will help. If you are unsure, call or go to the clinic immediately. We must take action when anyone, even politicians, create fear and confusion in our communities.



TREATMENT ACTION CAMPAIGN

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Plan for Life: Get Tested - Get Treatment - Use Condoms