



HIV Drug Information



Nevirapine (Viramune)

Why am I given nevirapine as my medication?

- Nevirapine (also called Viramune) is a drug that is used in combination with other drugs to treat HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection.
- Nevirapine blocks a protein called "reverse transcriptase." It belongs to a class of drugs called Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors (RTIs). The HIV virus needs this protein to reproduce itself, so by blocking it the drug helps slow down HIV disease.
- Taking this medication can reduce the amount of virus in your body. It can also reduce your chance of getting sick from AIDS-related illnesses, help you stay healthy longer or get your health back. It may also reduce the damage to your immune system.

How do I take this medication?

- Nevirapine comes in 200 mg tablets. Nevirapine is usually taken as 200 mg (1 tablet) once a day for the first 2 weeks, and then increased to 200 mg twice daily after. This is to minimize the side effects of nevirapine.
- Nevirapine can be taken with or without food.
- Nevirapine should be stored at room temperature in a dry place.
- Keep it out of reach of children.



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Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV-related illness and the treatments in question.

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What if I forget to take a dose?

- ☛ Take the dose you missed as soon as possible. However, if it is within 2 hours of your next dose, just continue with your regular schedule. Do not double the dose.
- ☛ Recent studies have found that for the anti-HIV medications to work, all the medications need to be taken regularly and consistently. Missing or skipping doses of your medication may make it lose its effectiveness as the virus can change and become resistant to the medication.

What are the side effects of nevirapine?

- ☛ The main side effect of nevirapine is a skin rash, which usually appears in the first 6 weeks of therapy. If you develop a rash within the first 2 weeks of starting nevirapine, do not increase the dose until you have seen your doctor or pharmacist.
- ☛ If the rash is mild, usually it can be managed with some medications and your body will probably adapt to the medication.
- ☛ If the rash is severe — with symptoms of fever, sores in the mouth, muscle or joint pain, eye swelling or red eyes — stop taking the medication and call your doctor or pharmacist right away.
- ☛ Other side effects may include:
 - headache
 - stomach upset
 - diarrhea
 - fever
 - fatigue
- ☛ Another rare and severe side effect of nevirapine includes hepatitis (inflammation of the liver), which occurs in 1% of people and can be fatal if not treated early.

If you have these symptoms, call your doctor or pharmacist to discuss your symptoms. Do not stop the medication or change your dose before you talk to your



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doctor or pharmacist. They may have suggestions of how you can manage the side effects without stopping the medication.

Can I take nevirapine with other medications?

- Nevirapine can interact with other drugs. It is important that you tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the prescription and non-prescription medications (including vitamins and herbs) you are taking.
- If you are taking nevirapine, avoid taking Rifampin.
- Nevirapine can decrease the blood levels of methadone and HIV drugs known as protease inhibitors:
 - saquinavir (Fortovase and Invirase)
 - indinavir (Crixivan)
 - ritonavir (Norvir)
 - nelfinavir (Viracept)
 - lopinavir (Kaletra)
 - amprenavir (Agenerase)

If you are taking nevirapine and any of these drugs together, their dosages may need to be adjusted.

- Nevirapine can reduce the effectiveness of birth control pills. If you are taking nevirapine, you should use a different method for birth control.

Can I take nevirapine with alcohol or street drugs?

- In general, it is advisable to avoid excessive amounts of alcohol and street drugs while you are taking anti-HIV medications.
- Alcohol may interact with some of your medications. Do not skip a dose of your medication because you want a drink.



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Can I take nevirapine if I am pregnant or breast-feeding?

- ☛ If you are pregnant and wish to take nevirapine, please consult your doctor about taking medication.
- ☛ Since the HIV virus can be transmitted through breast milk, breast-feeding is not recommended in HIV positive women.

What other precautions do I need to know when taking nevirapine?

- ☛ Nevirapine may affect your liver; in rare cases it may cause a form of hepatitis. You should keep your appointments with your physician for blood tests to check your liver function regularly.
- ☛ Make sure you have a continuous supply of the medication.
- ☛ Nevirapine does not kill the virus or cure AIDS. It also does not prevent the transmission of HIV, so please remember to always take precautions if you are having sex (latex condoms) or using drugs (clean syringes).

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