

# NEVIRAPINE

**Other NAMES:** Viramune®

## WHY is this drug prescribed?

Nevirapine is an antiretroviral (anti-HIV) drug that is part of the non nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NNRTIs or Non Nukes) family. It is used together with other antiretrovirals to delay the progression of HIV infection. By doing this, your immune system should improve (increase in CD4<sup>+</sup> count) and you will be better protected against infections.

Nevirapine does not cure AIDS or completely kill the HIV virus, but helps to prevent further damage by slowing down the production of new viruses. Treatment with nevirapine does not reduce the risk of passing infection on to others. You will still be able to pass HIV by sexual contact, by blood transfer or by sharing needles. You should always use appropriate precautions to prevent passing HIV on to others.

## HOW should this drug be taken?

Generally, the dose is 200 mg (1 tablet) once daily for 14 days. The dose is then increased to 200 mg (1 tablet) twice daily. A smaller dose is used during the first 14 days in order to decrease the risk of developing a rash.

Your dosage is:

200 mg tablet

From \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ to \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

\_\_\_ tablet (\_\_\_mg) once a day

then, as of \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_, **increase** to

\_\_\_ tablet (\_\_\_mg) \_\_\_times a day

Nevirapine can be taken with or without food. Nevirapine tablets should be swallowed unchewed with water.

## What should you do if you FORGET a dose?

If you miss a dose of nevirapine, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is time for your next dose, do not double the dose, just carry on with your regular schedule.

## Why should you not forget to take this drug?

If you miss doses of nevirapine, the amount of HIV virus in your blood (known as the viral load) will start increasing again and your immune system will be further damaged. A few missed doses can be enough for nevirapine to stop being active. A phenomenon known as **resistance**. When this happens, other antiretrovirals that work in a similar way to nevirapine may also become inactive. **Therefore, missing doses of nevirapine can decrease treatment options for the future.** Please do not stop nevirapine without talking to your doctor first.

## What ADVERSE EFFECTS can this drug cause? What should you do about them?

The most common adverse effect of nevirapine is a mild rash. Tell your doctor **immediately** if you develop a rash while taking nevirapine. **Especially if you are a woman, there is a greater risk of developing liver injury. In some cases, the injury has gone on to cause death. The greatest risk of liver damage occurs in the first 6 weeks of taking nevirapine. If you have a rash during the first 14 days of treatment, do not increase your dose to twice daily until you have spoken to your doctor.**

If you develop symptoms such as **fever, blistering, mouth sores, red eyes, swelling of the face, muscle or joint aches and a general feeling of being unwell, STOP** taking nevirapine. Speak with your doctor immediately.

Other common adverse effects are headache, nausea, diarrhea, somnolence and fatigue. Your doctor will also check your blood to see if there are any changes in your liver function.

**It is important that you keep your doctor appointments and come for your laboratory tests so that your progress can be followed.**

## What other PRECAUTIONS should you follow while using this drug?

You must make sure that you are taking the right dose. If you take higher doses of nevirapine than what is prescribed, you may increase the chance of having adverse effects. If you take lower doses of

nevirapine than what is prescribed, the HIV virus may become resistant to nevirapine.

Certain drugs can increase or decrease the effect of nevirapine. Also, nevirapine may influence the effect of many other drugs you are taking. Inform your doctor and pharmacist of all prescribed and non-prescribed drugs you are taking. As well, you should inform them of natural products you are taking. If you wish to start a new drug or natural product, please consult with your pharmacist before doing so.

The doses of certain drugs may need to be increased if you are taking nevirapine.

The efficacy of birth control pills or other hormones used to prevent becoming pregnant may decrease if you are taking nevirapine. A second method of contraception should **always** be used. In general, even if you are not taking nevirapine, the use of condoms is always recommended to decrease the risk of passing HIV on to others.

Please inform your doctor if you are pregnant. Your doctor can recommend the appropriate treatment to help reduce the risk of passing the HIV virus on to your baby. Breastfeeding is NOT recommended if you have HIV as you can transmit the virus to your baby through your breast milk.

### **How should this drug be STORED?**

Nevirapine should be stored in a cool (15-30°C) dry place, protected from light and well out of the reach of children. Ensure that the drug has not expired by checking the

expiry date ("EXP") shown on the outside of the package.

Do not store in your bathroom or kitchen, as heat and moisture may cause the drug to be less active.

**If you have any questions or concerns about this drug or if you are experiencing adverse effects, please discuss them with your pharmacist, doctor or nurse.**

**Write questions or concerns down to ensure they are addressed.**

The following pharmacist is available to answer questions:

**Pharmacist:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Reference: Product Monograph Viramune® (nevirapine). Burlington, On, Canada: Boehringer Ingelheim (Canada) Ltd, 2009. Prepared and updated by the Ontario HIV Pharmacy Professional Specialty Group, 2005. Reviewed 2009.

Additional medication fact sheets and updates may be found at: [www.hivclinic.ca](http://www.hivclinic.ca)

***NEVIRAPINE***

***MEDICATION***

***FACT SHEET***