



**The Information Exchange**

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## NEVIRAPINE (Viramune®)

Please read this factsheet together with the patient information leaflet carefully before taking your medicine. If you have any questions or are unsure about anything, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

**Nevirapine** also known as **Viramune** or **NVP** belongs to a class of drugs called **non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs)**. NNRTIs are used for the treatment of HIV infection, in combination with other anti-HIV drugs. Please speak to your clinic doctor or pharmacist if you would like more information about how these drugs work.

### Before taking Nevirapine

Tell your doctor about:

- All other drugs you are taking, including any that you buy over the counter in a community pharmacy and any herbal medicines or recreational drugs
- Any previous allergy to any medicines
- If you have ever had any liver or kidney disease
- If you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant

### Taking your Nevirapine

- Nevirapine is available as a white oval shaped tablet with 54/193 written on one side, containing 200 mg of Nevirapine. Nevirapine is also available as a liquid containing 50mg in 5ml.
- The initial starting dose is 200 mg once each day for two weeks - then increased to 200 mg twice each day. This two-week lead-in period is recommended to reduce the frequency of side effects. Some doctors are recommending patients take their nevirapine as 400mg (two tablets) once daily once their viral load becomes undetectable to help simplify their drug regime.
- You can take the tablets before, with or after food.
- The doses should be divided equally throughout the day. Try to take the doses at the same time each day.
- Nevirapine works best if there is a constant amount in your bloodstream. It is therefore very important to take the tablets regularly. If you forget a dose take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose anyway, forget about the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose.

Do not run out of nevirapine. If you are going on holiday and need additional supplies, tell your doctor. When receiving a supply from pharmacy, ensure that you have an adequate supply to last until your next appointment.

## Other drugs and nevirapine

Nevirapine is metabolised (processed in the body) by the liver. Some other drugs are metabolised in the same way. This is why it is important to tell your doctor about all the medicines that you take even if you only take them occasionally, including herbal and recreational drugs. Examples of some drugs that are metabolised in the same way as nevirapine and should NOT be taken are rifampicin, phenytoin, phenobarbitone, simvastatin, terfenadine (Triludan<sup>®</sup>) ergotamine, certain benzodiazepines and St. John's Wort. Other examples of drugs that are metabolised in the same way as nevirapine include rifabutin, warfarin, methadone and the protease inhibitors. Your doctor may alter your doses if you are taking one of these drugs.

**Nevirapine can stop certain hormonal contraceptives from working effectively, and you may need to use an alternative or additional form of contraception, e.g. barrier methods. Discuss this with your clinic doctor.**

## Side Effects

Nevirapine, like all other medicines, has some side effects. The most common ones affecting more than 1 in every 100 patients are:

- Skin rash – If you experience a **MILD** skin rash do not stop taking your Nevirapine but contact your doctor and they will advise you what to do. If you experience a **SEVERE SKIN RASH** or a rash accompanied by other symptoms such as fever, blistering, oral lesions, conjunctivitis, facial swelling, muscle or joint aches or general malaise **STOP** taking your **Nevirapine** and contact your doctor **IMMEDIATELY**.
- Nausea
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Liver damage can occur in rare cases this is more common in women and people with higher CD4 counts. You will be monitored with regular blood tests, especially through the first 18 weeks of therapy. If you experience loss of appetite, nausea, jaundice, rash, fever or liver tenderness, you should seek medical attention promptly.

If you experience any of these side effects or any other new symptoms after you start Nevirapine, tell your doctor who will advise you what to do. If you decide to stop taking Nevirapine, it is important that you tell your doctor so that he or she can discuss other treatment options with you.

## Admission to hospital

If you are admitted to hospital please bring all your medicines with you. This is so the nurses can continue to give them to you on the ward. This is especially important for anti-HIV medications as they need to be taken regularly.

## Storing your Nevirapine

Nevirapine should be stored at room temperature.

This information was prepared by the HIV/GUM pharmacy department at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. If you have any queries regarding the information, please call Kobler Pharmacist on 020 3315 5604

Updated January 2011