

EFAVIRENZ

eh-fah-veer-enz

What does it do?

Efavirenz is used with other medicines to control HIV.

Before you start

- Tell your doctor if you have liver or mental health problems.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.

How should you take it?

Take *efavirenz* as directed, usually at night time. It is very important to take it regularly. If you often forget to take *efavirenz*, it may not work as well.

Take the tablets with a glass of water.

Measure the liquid carefully with an oral syringe or measuring spoon.

What if you forget a dose?

If it is nearly time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the usual time. Otherwise, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. Do not take two doses at the same time.

Can you take other medicines?

Efavirenz can react with many medicines, sometimes with severe results.

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking including vitamins, herbal products, or recreational drugs.

What side effects might you notice?

| Side Effects | Recommended action |
|---|---|
| Severe skin rash, skin peeling or blisters | Stop taking and see your doctor immediately |
| Symptoms of liver problems including: yellow skin or eyes, itching, dark urine, pale bowel motions, abdominal pain Suicidal thoughts | Tell your doctor immediately |
| Unusual behaviour or thinking, low mood, nervousness, anxiety | Tell your doctor |
| Stomach upset | Tell your doctor if troublesome |
| Drowsiness, dizziness, trouble concentrating, tiredness or weakness, headache Trouble sleeping, strange dreams | Common when you first start but should improve in a few weeks. Taking at night may help. If these continue or are severe, tell your doctor. |
| Skin rash | This can occur in the first few weeks. Rarely, this may be serious. Ring your clinic to check |

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Other information:

- You will need regular blood tests while taking *efavirenz* to check if it is causing problems with your liver. You will also need blood tests to check your viral load.
- *Efavirenz* can impair your ability to do tasks such as driving or using machines. Alcohol makes this worse. Discuss your risk with your health professional. (search NZTA - Are you safe to drive?)
- Grapefruit, grapefruit juice or sour/Seville oranges may react with *efavirenz*. Discuss with your pharmacist.
- As your HIV comes under control, your immune system begins to recover. It may start fighting infections better than before which may make you unwell for a while. Your doctor may call this Immune Reconstitution Syndrome.
- Treatment for HIV may change your body shape. These changes can include fat build-up, fat loss, or both. Discuss this with your doctor.
- Do not stop taking *efavirenz* without talking to your doctor first.
- *Efavirenz* liquid expires 30 days after you first open the bottle. If you have any liquid leftover after 30 days, take it back to your pharmacy.

This leaflet contains important, but not all, information about this medicine.

Prepared by the MyMedicines Committee at Christchurch Hospital, Te Whatu Ora - Waitaha, New Zealand. March 2023