Efavirenz is an antiretroviral drug that acts by preventing multiplication of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Efavirenz is a non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor. It inhibits reverse transcriptase action when the virus enters the host cell. The virus needs reverse transcriptase to multiply in the body.

Efavirenz is used in combination with other antiretroviral drugs to slow progression of the disease and reduce the risk of opportunistic infections (AIDS-related infections).

Efavirenz does not cure AIDS or kill the virus. There is a permanent risk of transmitting HIV either through sexual or blood contact. It is therefore essential that precautions always be taken (latex condoms, clean syringes, etc.).

Fertile women must use an effective means of birth control.

How do I take this medication?

Your dosage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efavirenz</th>
<th>50-, 100-, 200-mg capsule</th>
<th>600-mg tablet</th>
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Efavirenz can be taken with or without food.

If you take only one dose a day, take it before bedtime to minimize side effects during the day. If you have nightmares, take your medication at supper-time. However, avoid taking efavirenz with a meal rich in fat. The presence of fat increases the absorption of efavirenz and could increase the risk of experiencing adverse effects.

It is important to take your antiretroviral medicine properly - i.e. never forget a dose, follow the instructions on how to take the medicine, and always keep on with your treatment.

It is important to take efavirenz regularly, at the same time each day, and to keep to this schedule as closely as possible. Adherence to therapy will help prevent resistance (HIV’s ability to recognize and defeat the effect of the medication) and avoid treatment failure (loss of efficacy of the antiretroviral treatment), which would result in an increased viral load and a lower number of CD4 cells, which are the ones that help your body fight infection.

Nearly everyone tends to relax their compliance with the treatment at some point. The key to success is motivation. Consult members of your care team so that they can explain the benefits of the treatment you are having. They can also suggest ways that will help you maintain it properly.

Never stop your treatment without first speaking to your doctor.

What if I forget to take a dose?

Take the dose you missed as soon as possible, and then continue with your regular schedule.

If it is nearly time for your next dose, however, just take that one at the usual time. Do not double up doses.
What are the side effects of this medication?

The main side effects of efavirenz are drowsiness, dizziness, insomnia, nightmares and concentration problems. You may also feel like you’ve had a little too much to drink. These side effects tend to disappear with time.

Efavirenz can also cause a skin rash, generally in the first two weeks of therapy. Sometimes the rash is mild, in which case your doctor can treat it with an antihistamine (Benadryl®, Atarax®, etc.) or an anti-inflammatory agent cream. In other cases, however, treatment must be stopped.

If the reaction is strong (i.e., you have one or more of the following symptoms: fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, swelling, blisters, mouth ulcers, bloodshot eyes, severe tiredness, muscle and joint aches), your doctor will stop efavirenz.

If you get a rash, contact your doctor immediately.

Inform your doctor and your pharmacist of any troublesome side effects.

Can I take efavirenz with my other medications?

- **St. John's wort**
  St. John's wort can decrease the efficacy of efavirenz and possibly allow the virus to develop resistance. *Do not take St. John's wort while you are taking efavirenz.*

Efavirenz may interact with a number of other drugs.

Consult your doctor or pharmacist before taking any new prescription or non-prescription medication, natural product or recreational drug.

Can I drink alcohol if I’m on efavirenz?

Avoid excessive or regular consumption of alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, spirits), as this may increase the risk of hepatitis (inflammation of the liver) or interact with some of your medications.

However, do not miss a dose of your medication because you want to have an alcoholic drink. Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, reasonable (social) consumption should not damage your health.

What if I’m pregnant or breast-feeding?

Efavirenz should not generally be used by pregnant women.

Since the virus can be transmitted through maternal milk, breast-feeding is not recommended in HIV-positive women.

Storage

Keep efavirenz in a dry place at room temperature (15-30°C or 59-86°F). Avoid humidity (bathrooms, etc.).

Keep out of sight and reach of children.

General advice

Keep your appointments with your doctor and the care team, so that your health can be closely monitored.

If you have any questions about your medications or need help to schedule when to take them, please contact your doctor or pharmacist, who is familiar with what you are taking.

Contact person: ______________________________

Telephone: ______________________________