

Efavirenz | (Also known as Sustiva®)

This leaflet is designed to give you a general idea of the most important things you need to know about your new medicine. It is not supposed to replace the manufacturer's leaflet that comes with the medicine but is intended to be read alongside it. After reading this leaflet if you have any questions please ask your clinic team.

Clinic contact details:

What is Efavirenz?

Efavirenz is a medicine to treat HIV. The colour and shape may vary depending on the manufacturer as it is a generic medicine.

Efavirenz is used in combination with other medicines for the treatment of HIV and must not be taken by itself as it will not be effective.

Please speak to your clinic team if you would like more information about how this drug works.


How should I take Efavirenz?

- The recommended dose is: ONE tablet ONCE a day, usually taken at night on an empty stomach.
- If you vomit within 2 hours of taking your medicine take another dose. If you continue to vomit please contact your clinic.
- Please do not crush, if you have trouble swallowing this tablet please contact your clinic team.
- Please ensure you bring a supply of your HIV medicines if you are being admitted to hospital to ensure you are prescribed the correct medication and that you do not miss any doses.

What if I miss a dose?

HIV medicines work best if there is a constant amount of the medicine in your body. If you are worried about forgetting to take your medicines, speak to your clinic team.

Occasionally you may forget a dose. If this happens, please follow the guidance below and speak with your clinic as soon as possible for advice.

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- If you realise you have not taken your medicine and it is within 12 hours of when you should have taken it, take it as soon as you can and take your next dose at the usual time.
 - If it is longer than 12 hours, take your next dose as usual.
 - Never take a double dose to make up for the missed one.

What are the common side effects with efavirenz?

If you experience any side effects, and either they are troubling you or you develop any new symptoms after you start efavirenz, do not stop taking your medication, instead please contact your clinic team so they can discuss other treatment options with you and/or advise you how to stop safely.

Some examples of the most common side effects are listed below (for a full list of side effects please check the manufacturer's information leaflet):



Efavirenz can very rarely cause a severe skin rash (with blistering). If you develop a rash after starting efavirenz, contact your clinic.



Head side effects: Dizziness/light-headedness, headache, insomnia (poor sleep), vivid dreams, tiredness. If you feel dizzy or drowsy, you must not drive or operate machinery. These side effects usually wear off after a few weeks but if they continue and are a problem for you, discuss this with your clinic team. Efavirenz can sometimes cause changes in your mood, including feeling worried, depressed or angry. Speak to your clinic team if you experience this.



Stomach side effects: nausea (feeling sick), vomiting and diarrhoea.

What medicines should I avoid with Efavirenz?

It is important that you tell anyone prescribing you medication about any medicines you are taking. This includes prescribed medicines, recreational or party drugs, and/or supplements you buy over the counter. Always tell your clinic team if you are taking (note this is not an exhaustive list of medicines):

Medicine	Why this is important
St John's wort for depression	This can reduce the level of efavirenz within your body, meaning it may be less effective at suppressing the virus.
Statins (cholesterol-lowering medicines)	Efavirenz can reduce the amount of statin in your body. Your clinic team will help choose the right statin for you.
Antibiotics and antifungals	Efavirenz can lower the amount of some antibiotics and antifungals in your blood. Alternatives may need to be considered.
Contraceptives (birth control)	Efavirenz can reduce the amount of contraceptive in your body, making it less effective. Your clinic team will help choose the right method of contraception for you.
Lenacapavir (tablets and injections)	Efavirenz can reduce the amount of lenacapavir in your body, meaning it may be less effective at suppressing the virus. These medicines should not be taken together.
Antiplatelets (e.g clopidogrel), DOACs (e.g rivaroxaban), enzalutamide, rifampicin	Speak to your clinic team before taking any of these medicines.

Can I take efavirenz if I'm pregnant or breastfeeding?

If you become pregnant or are planning to start a family, do not stop taking your medication. Speak to your clinic so that your care can be managed appropriately. It is important you are on effective treatment to reduce the risk to your unborn child.

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