

NEVIRAPINE (VIRAMUNE, NVP)

USE:

Nevirapine is an antiretroviral drug in a class called non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs). It is used in combination with other antiretroviral drugs to treat HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infections. This drug is not a cure for HIV. Nevirapine may also be used for other indications determined by your doctor.

AVAILABLE AS: 200 milligram (mg) tablet; Oral liquid as 50mg/5ml



HOW TO USE THIS MEDICATION:

It is important to take your medication exactly as directed by your doctor. The normal dose for nevirapine is 200mg once daily for 14 days then 200mg twice daily thereafter. This will minimize the risk of side effects. Dosing for children will be based on their age and weight, which will be determined by your doctor. Nevirapine may be taken with water, milk, or soda. This medication can be taken with or without foods. If taking the liquid form of nevirapine, shake the bottle gently before each dose and measure the dose with a measuring syringe or measuring spoon for the most accurate dose.

Nevirapine has been associated with rare but serious liver problems. Your doctor will want you to have blood tests before and during use of this medication to monitor for these types of side effects.

It is important to take every dose of nevirapine. If a dose is missed, it should be taken as soon as possible unless it is close to your next dose. Do not take two doses at once. If you have missed more than 7 days in a row of this medication, call your doctor for instructions on how to re-start your medication. If you think you may have taken too much of your medication, contact your local poison control center or emergency room right away.

This medication should be stored in a cool, dry place. Avoid storing this medication in extreme heat, cold or moisture. Always keep medication out of the reach of children.

CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Do not take nevirapine if you have had an allergic reaction to nevirapine (Viramune) or any of its components. Also do not take nevirapine if you stopped taking it in the past because of an allergic reaction or liver problems.

SIDE EFFECTS:

Side effects that may go away with time include muscle or joint pain, upset stomach, nausea, or a mild rash. Skin rash is the most common side effect of nevirapine. Most cases are mild and will go away with time. Ask your doctor about ways to manage this side effect with steroids or antihistamines. Changes in body fat have also been seen with

this medication. Notify your doctor if you notice loss of fat from the legs, arms and face or increased fat in the upper back and neck, breast, and around the trunk. Exercise may lessen the risk of this side effect.

Warning: Contact your doctor immediately if you experience any of the symptoms listed below. Stop taking the medication immediately and seek medical attention if you have a rash that is accompanied with blisters, fever, mouth sores, red or irritated eyes, swelling in the face, muscle or joint pain, or weakness. Nevirapine can cause serious liver problems. Call your doctor immediately if you experience a general ill feeling, tiredness, lack of appetite, yellowing of the skin or eyes, darkening of the urine, pale stools, or tenderness in your stomach. These could be signs of this condition. Make sure you keep all of your appointments for blood tests since they can catch this side effect before it becomes serious. Tell your doctor if you have liver problems before starting this medication.

Notify your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or breastfeeding. Nevirapine's effects on an unborn baby are still unclear. People with HIV should never breastfeed because of the risk of transmitting HIV to the infant.

This medication does not prevent the transmission of HIV to other people. Make sure you understand and practice safe sex and do not share needles with anyone.

DRUG INTERACTIONS:

Nevirapine is broken down by the liver. Other medications that are also broken down by the liver may affect how well nevirapine works. Likewise, nevirapine can affect how other medications work. Always tell your doctor what medications you are taking and have taken in the past. Make sure you notify your doctor if you are taking ketoconazole (Nizoral), methadone, rifampin (Rifadin, Rimactane), rifabutin (Mycobutin), or the herbal supplement St. John's wort (*hypericum perforatum*). Also, birth control may be less effective when taken together with nevirapine. Talk to your doctor about other methods of birth control when taking nevirapine.

Nevirapine may not be as effective in patients who have unsuccessfully taken efavirenz (Sustiva) or delavirdine (Rescriptor), the other two medications in the class of drugs called NNRTIs. This decreased effectiveness is a result of a mutation in the genetic structure of HIV that makes the virus resistant to these medications

Make sure your doctor is aware of any medications you are using including over the counter items, herbals, vitamins and prescription products. Ask your doctor or pharmacist before using any medication with nevirapine.

References: see references 40-43