

**OAK TREE CLINIC
INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS/PARENTS**

DRUG NAME: NELFINAVIR

BRAND NAME: VIRACEPT

THIS MEDICATION IS:

- An antiviral drug that slow the growth of HIV, the virus associated with AIDS
- Nelfinavir belongs to a group of drugs called protease inhibitors. Protease inhibitors work by inhibiting the enzyme protease (also called proteinase) which is needed for HIV to multiply. Inhibiting this enzyme produces incomplete, noninfectious HIV particles. Other protease inhibitors are indinavir, saquinavir, lopinavir and ritonavir. Nelfinavir is always used in combination with other anti-HIV agents

BENEFITS OF NELFINAVIR

- It reduces the amount of HIV virus (viral load) and increases the number of CD4 cells (T cells or immune cells) in the blood.
- By reducing the amount of HIV virus it decreases the chance of death or infections that happen when the immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

AVAILABILITY OF NELFINAVIR

- Nelfinavir is available as 250 mg tablets.
- Nelfinavir is also available as an oral powder containing 200mg per level teaspoonful (50 mg of nelfinavir per gram of powder). A measuring scoop is provided with the oral powder - each level scoop delivers 50 mg of nelfinavir. It is important to measure the nelfinavir powder with the scoop provided.

HOW TO TAKE NELFINAVIR

- The usual adult dose is 750 mg (three tablets) three times daily or 1250 mg (5 tablets) twice daily.
- The dose of nelfinavir is based on the child's weight (20 to 30 milligrams per kilogram of body weight).
- Food increases the absorption of nelfinavir by two to three times. Nelfinavir is taken three times daily with a meal or a light snack.
- The oral powder may be mixed with water, milk, formula, soy formula, soy milk, ice cream, pudding or dietary supplements such as Ensure, Pediasure or Boost. Once mixed with food or liquid it should be used within 6 hours. The oral powder should **NOT** be mixed with acidic food or juices- these include orange juice, apple juice, grape juice, grapefruit juice and apple sauce.
- **DO NOT ADD WATER TO THE BOTTLE OF NELFINAVIR POWDER.**
- Nelfinavir should be started at the full dose (do not work your way up to full dose gradually).
- Do not interrupt therapy . Skipping doses or taking a drug holiday can lead to the development of virus that is resistant to nelfinavir.

DOSING OF NELFINAVIR

Your dose of NELFINAVIR is _____ mg _____ times a day.

IF YOU MISS A DOSE: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take the dose as soon as you remember that day.
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- If it is almost time for the next dose (within 2 hours), skip the missed dose and take the next dose at the regular time.
- **DO NOT** double the dose.

PROBLEMS WHICH MAY BE ENCOUNTERED:

This list of side effects is NOT complete. If you have questions about side effects, please contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Check with your doctor IMMEDIATELY if any of the following side effects occur:

- nausea, vomiting or severe abdominal pain. These may be signs of pancreatitis.

The following side effects sometimes happen. Call the clinic pharmacist, nurse, or doctor if they continue or are very bothersome.

- abnormal stools (bowel movements), diarrhea, feeling weak/tired, headache and nausea.
- children may get a skin rash

The following side effects may occur and will be monitored by your doctor with regular blood tests:

It is important that the visits be kept as scheduled so that the blood can be checked regularly, especially when the drug is first started.

- liver enzyme tests may become elevated.
- some patients have large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol.
- diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) may occur. If you notice increased thirst, hunger and urination, contact your doctor as soon as possible.

Lipodystrophy:

- some patients that have been on antiretroviral therapy for a long time (usually more than 6 months) notice changes in the location of their body fat - this is called lipodystrophy.
- patients may notice a loss of fat in their face, arms or legs, while others notice increased fat in the stomach, neck or breast areas. Talk to your doctor if you notice these changes. These changes may not be reversible.

Increased bleeding episodes:

- patients with hemophilia may have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors. If you have hemophilia, make sure you report any increase in bleeding episodes to your doctor.

DRUGS WHICH CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS WHEN TAKEN WITH NELFINAVIR

There are many drugs that may interact with nelfinavir. Please discuss **ALL** medications that you are currently taking with your doctor or pharmacist.

DO NOT take the following medications while you are on nelfinavir. **Serious or life threatening**

reactions may result when nelfinavir is combined with these medications:

Dihydroergotaine, ergonovine, ergotamine and methylergonovine such as Cafegot, Migranal, D.H.E. 45, ergotrate maleate, methergine and others.	Rifampin
Halcion (triazolam)	Seldane (terfenadine)
Hismanal (astemizole)	Versed (midazolam)
Propulsid (cisapride)	

Special Considerations**DO NOT combine these medications**

Drugs	Effect	Action
St. John's Wort (hypericum perforatum)	St. John's Wort may decrease nelfinavir levels and make it less effective	Do not take with St. John's Wort
Lipid lowering agents: Mevacor (lovastatin), Zocor (simvastatin), Lipitor (atorvastatin) and Baycol (cerivastatin)	Lovastatin and simvastatin may cause serious reactions. Atorvastatin and cerivastatin have an increased risk of drug interactions.	Do not take with lovastatin or simvastatin.

Dosage adjustment is required with these medications:

Drugs	Effect	Action
Rifabutin	Rifampin may lower the amount of nelfinavir in your blood and make it less effective, also, nelfinavir may lower the amount of rifabutin in your blood	The doses of rifabutin and nelfinavir may need to be adjusted.
Viagra (sildenafil)	Nelfinavir will increase the side effects of sildenafil (low blood pressure, vision changes, penis erection)	If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, seek immediate medical help. You should not take more than 25 mg of sildenafil in any 2 day period.
Oral Contraceptives ("the pill")	Nelfinavir may decrease the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.	Additional birth control is required. A non-hormonal method of birth control should be used (ie. male or female condoms)
Anticonvulsants: phenobarbital, Dilantin (phenytoin) and Tegretol (carbamazepine)	Some anticonvulsants lower the levels of nelfinavir making it less effective. Nelfinavir may increase the levels of anticonvulsants.	Additional blood tests may be required to monitor the effect of nelfinavir on blood levels.

CAUTIONS:

- Throw away any expired or leftover medication.
- Keep out of reach of children.
- The doctor or Poison Control Centre should be contacted in the event of accidental overdose of this or any other drug.