

OAK TREE CLINIC
INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS/PARENTS

DRUG NAME: EFAVIRENZ

BRAND NAME: SUSTIVA® (DMP-266)

THIS MEDICATION IS:

- An antiviral drug that slows the growth of HIV, the virus associated with AIDS. Efavirenz does not cure AIDS, but it helps by decreasing the amount of virus in the body (**decreases the viral load**)
- A type of drug called a non-nucleoside analogue (**Non-Nukes**) that slows the rate of copying (reproduction) of HIV by stopping the action of an enzyme called reverse transcriptase.
- Always used in combination with other antiviral medications

BENEFITS OF EFAVIRENZ:

- It improves the function of the immune system, helping to prevent other infections that may occur in patients with HIV disease (**increases the CD4 counts**)
- It may help increase appetite which helps patients to gain weight and improve their energy level.
- It decreases muscle aches and night sweats.

AVAILABILITY AND STORAGE OF EFAVIRENZ:

- Efavirenz is available in 200 mg (gold), 100 mg (white), 50 mg (gold and white) capsules and should be stored in a tightly closed container at room temperature.

HOW TO TAKE EFAVIRENZ:

Adults and Older Children:

- The usual adult dose is 600 mg (3 of the 200 mg capsules) once daily. While it can be taken at any time of day, most people prefer to take it at bedtime. If side effects are troubling, the dosage can be divided and taken twice daily (1 capsule in the morning and 2 capsules in the evening). Do not change your dose without consulting with your clinic physician.
- Efavirenz capsules should be swallowed whole either with or without food.
- The capsules may be opened mixed with apple sauce if you are unable to swallow the capsules whole. It will taste like hot chillies.
- It is important to take the medication at the same time each day

YOUR EFAVIRENZ DOSE IS: _____ TAKEN _____ TIMES A DAY.

IF YOU MISS A DOSE:

- If it is more than 12 hours before the next dose, then take missed dose as soon as you remember and then take the next dose at the normal time.
- But if it is less than 12 hours before the next dose, then forget about the missed dose and take the next dose at the normal time
- Do NOT give a double dose of this medication.
- If you vomit within 30 minutes of taking a dose or if you see bits of the tablet/capsule, then you should repeat the dose.

PROBLEMS WHICH MAY BE ENCOUNTERED (SIDE EFFECTS):

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

- Dizziness, lightheadedness, drowsiness, headaches, anxiety, restlessness or the occasional inability to concentrate. Some people describe feeling "out of sorts", and some people report unusual dreams. It is best to take this medication at bedtime.
- These usually occur within 1-2 hours after taking a dose, and last a few hours. They usually go away within 2 weeks of starting efavirenz. If they do not go away, or if they are very bothersome, call the clinic pharmacist or physician.
- Rash - which is usually mild and goes away even when efavirenz is continued.
- Stop taking efavirenz and notify your doctor immediately if you develop a severe rash or a rash associated with symptoms such as fever, blistering, mouth sores, conjunctivitis (inflammation and redness of the eye), swelling, muscle or joint aches, or a general feeling of being unwell.
- A number of other side effects have been reported when efavirenz has been used in combination with other drugs. These include: diarrhea, coughing, fatigue, abdominal pain (stomachache), difficulty sleeping, nausea, vomiting and back pain. It is not clear which of these effects were due to efavirenz.

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

- Liver function tests may become elevated.

DRUGS WHICH CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS WHEN USED WITH EFAVIRENZ:

Do NOT take Efavirenz with the following medications:

- **Non-drowsy antihistamines astemizole (Hismanal®) and terfenadine (Seldane®).**
 - The non-drowsy antihistamines fexofenadine (Allegra®) and loratidine (Claritin®) are OK.
- **Cisapride (Prepuslid®)** – a stomach medicine

Efavirenz can interact with the following medications and cause unwanted effects:

- **Indinavir (a protease inhibitor)**- efavirenz decreases the amount of indinavir in the blood, making it less effective. If you are taking indinavir with efavirenz, this will be discussed with you in detail.
- **Triazolam (Halcion®) and midazolam (Versed®).** - your physician may choose alternatives
- **Methadone** – efavirenz may change your methadone requirements. You may experience withdrawal symptoms. Discuss this with your methadone prescriber.

CAUTIONS

- Throw away any expired or leftover medication.
- Keep out of reach of children.
- Contact your doctor or the Poison Control Centre in the event of an accidental overdose of this or any other drug.

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