Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand
Waitaha Canterbury

EFAVIRENZ

eh-fah-veer-enz

What does it do?

Efavirenz is used with other medicines to control HIV.

Before you start

- Tell your doctor if you have liver or mental health problems, or if you have ever had hepatitis B or C.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.

How should you take it?

Take *efavirenz* regularly as directed, usually at night time. You can take it with or without food.
It is very important to take *efavirenz* regularly. If you often forget to take it, it may not work as well.
Tablet: Take with a glass of water.
Liquid: Measure carefully with an oral syringe.

Do not stop taking *efavirenz* without talking to your doctor first, unless you get a severe skin rash (see side effects).

What if you forget a dose?

If it is nearly time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the usual time. Otherwise, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. Do not take two doses at the same time.

Can you take other medicines?

Efavirenz can react with many medicines, sometimes with severe results. Remember to tell your pharmacist or doctor you are taking *efavirenz* before starting any other medicines or treatments, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbal products or recreational drugs.

What side effects might you notice?

Side Effects	Recommended action
Severe skin rash, skin peeling or blisters	Stop taking and see your doctor immediately
Symptoms of liver problems including: yellow skin or eyes, itching, dark urine, pale bowel motions, abdominal pain Suicidal thoughts	Tell your doctor immediately
Unusual behaviour or thinking, low mood, anxiety	Tell your doctor
Stomach upset	Tell your doctor if troublesome
Drowsiness, dizziness, trouble concentrating, headache Trouble sleeping, strange dreams	Common when you first start but should improve in a few weeks. Taking at night may help. If these continue or are severe, tell your doctor.
Skin rash	This can occur in the first few weeks. Rarely, this may be serious. Ring your clinic to check

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Other information:

- You will need regular blood tests while taking *efavirenz* to check if it is causing problems with your liver. You will also need blood tests to check your viral load.
- *Efavirenz* can impair your ability to do tasks such as driving or using machines. Alcohol makes this worse. Discuss your risk with your health professional. (search NZTA - Are you safe to drive?)
- As your HIV comes under control, your immune system begins to recover. It may start fighting infections better than before which may make you unwell for a while. Your doctor may call this Immune Reconstitution Inflammatory Syndrome (IRIS).
- Weight gain may occur with treatment for HIV. Discuss this with your health professional.
- *Efavirenz* liquid expires 30 days after you first open the bottle. If you have any liquid leftover after 30 days, take it back to your pharmacy.
- *Efavirenz* is not registered for use in New Zealand. Discuss with your doctor.

This leaflet contains important, but not all, information about this medicine.
Prepared by the MyMedicines Committee at Christchurch Hospital, Te Whatu Ora - Waitaha, New Zealand. March 2026