



# Drug Information

## NEVIRAPINE (Viramune)

Last updated September 2003

### Why am I given nevirapine as my medication?

- Nevirapine (also called Viramune) is a drug that is used in combination with other drugs to treat HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection.
- Nevirapine blocks a protein called “Reverse Transcriptase”. It belongs to a class of drugs called Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors (RTI). The HIV virus needs this protein to reproduce itself, so by blocking it the drug helps slow down HIV disease.
- Taking this medication can reduce the amount of virus in your body. It can also reduce your chance of getting sick from AIDS related illnesses, help you stay healthy longer or get your health back. It may also reduce the damage to your immune system.

### How do I take this medication?

- Nevirapine comes in 200mg tablets. nevirapine is usually taken as 200 mg (1 tablet) once a day for the first 2 weeks, and then increased to 200 mg twice daily after. This is to minimize the side effects of nevirapine.
- Nevirapine can be taken with or without food.
- Nevirapine should be stored at room temperature in a dry place. Keep it out of reach of children.

### What if I forget to take a dose?

- Take the dose you missed as soon as possible. However, if it is within 2 hours of your next dose, just continue with your regular schedule. Do not double the dose.
- Recent studies have found that for the anti-HIV medications to work, all the medications need to be taken regularly and consistently. Missing or skipping doses of your medication may make it lose its effectiveness as the virus can change and become resistant to the medication.

### What are the side effects of nevirapine?

- The main side effect of nevirapine is a skin rash, which usually appears in the first 6 weeks of therapy. If you develop a rash within the first 2 weeks of starting nevirapine, do not increase the dose until you have seen your doctor or pharmacist.
  - If the rash is mild, usually it can be managed with some medications and your body will probably adapt to the medication.
  - If the rash is severe, with symptoms of fever, sores in the mouth, muscle or joint pain, eye swelling or red eyes; stop taking the medication and call your doctor or pharmacist right away.
- Other side effects may include:
  - Headache
  - stomach upset and diarrhea
  - fever
  - fatigue

