

# Efavirenz

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

## Brand Names: US

Sustiva

## Brand Names: Canada

Auro-Efavirenz; JAMP-Efavirenz; MYLAN-Efavirenz; Sustiva; TEVA-Efavirenz

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat HIV infection.

## What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child has had red, blistered, swollen, or peeling skin after taking efavirenz.
- If your child has liver disease.
- If your child takes any drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) that must not be taken with this drug, like certain drugs that are used for hepatitis C, HIV, or infections. There are many drugs that must not be taken with this drug.

- If your child is taking another drug that has the same drug in it.

### **If your child is breast-feeding a baby:**

- Be sure your child does not breast-feed a baby while taking this drug.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for your child to take this drug with all of his/her drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

### **What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?**

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Do not run out of this drug.
- Have your child's blood work checked often. Talk with your child's doctor.
- Have your child avoid tasks or actions that call for alertness until you see how this drug affects your child. These are things like riding a bike, playing sports, or using items such as scissors, lawnmowers, electric scooters, toy cars, or motorized vehicles.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your child's health care providers and lab workers that your child takes this drug.
- Alcohol may interact with this drug. Be sure your child does not drink alcohol.
- Talk with the doctor before giving your child other drugs and natural products that may slow your child's actions.
- This drug is not a cure for HIV. Be sure your child stays under the care of the doctor.
- This drug does not stop the spread of diseases like HIV or hepatitis that are

passed through blood. Be sure needles and other things like toothbrushes or razors are not shared.

- This drug interacts with many other drugs. The chance of this drug's side effects may be raised or how well this drug works may be lowered. The chance of the other drugs' side effects may also be raised. This may include very bad, life-threatening, or deadly side effects. Check with the doctor and pharmacist to make sure that it is safe for your child to take this drug with all of their other drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins).
- This drug may raise the chance of seizures in some people, including people who have had seizures in the past. Talk to the doctor to see if your child has a greater chance of seizures while taking this drug.
- This drug may cause high cholesterol and triglyceride levels. Talk with the doctor.
- Liver problems have happened with this drug. Sometimes these problems have been severe, leading to liver transplant or death. Liver problems may happen in people with or without liver disease. Talk with the doctor.
- If your child's weight changes, talk with the doctor. The dose of this drug may need to be changed.
- If your child is of childbearing age, a pregnancy test will need to be done before starting this drug to make sure she is not pregnant.

**If your child is or may be sexually active:**

- This drug does not stop the spread of diseases like HIV or hepatitis that are passed through having sex. Be sure your child does not have any kind of sex without using a latex or polyurethane condom.
- Birth control pills and other hormone-based birth control may not work as well to prevent pregnancy. Be sure your child uses some other kind of birth control also, like a condom, when taking this drug.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if your child takes it during pregnancy.
- Have your child use birth control while taking this drug and for some time after

the last dose. Ask the doctor how long your child must use birth control. If your child becomes pregnant, call the doctor right away.

## **What are some side effects that I need to call my child's doctor about right away?**

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- New or worse behavior or mood changes like depression or thoughts of suicide.
- Memory problems or loss.
- Seizures.
- Change in body fat.
- Very bad dizziness or passing out.
- A type of abnormal heartbeat (prolonged QT interval) can happen with this drug. Call the doctor right away if your child has a fast heartbeat, a heartbeat that does not feel normal, or if your child passes out.
- A very bad skin reaction (Stevens-Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis) may happen. It can cause very bad health problems that may not go away, and sometimes death. Get medical help right away if your child has signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin (with or without fever); red or irritated eyes; or sores in the mouth, throat, nose, or eyes.
- Changes in your child's immune system can happen when your child starts taking drugs to treat HIV. If your child has an infection that you did not know

was there, it may show up when your child takes this drug. Tell your child's doctor right away if your child has any new signs after starting this drug, even after taking it for several months. This includes signs of infection like fever, sore throat, weakness, cough, or shortness of breath.

- Severe nervous system problems have happened. These may include feeling confused, behavior or mood changes, balance problems, other movement problems, or hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there). Sometimes, this has happened months to years after starting this drug. Call the doctor right away if your child has any of these effects.

## **What are some other side effects of this drug?**

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Diarrhea.
- Headache.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Nervous system problems are common with this drug. These may include dizziness, sleepiness, trouble sleeping or focusing, or abnormal dreams. Most of the time, this goes away after 2 to 4 weeks. Giving this drug at bedtime may help with these effects. If your child feels dizzy, sleepy, or has trouble focusing, have your child avoid tasks or actions that call for alertness. Call the doctor if these effects last, they bother your child, or are severe.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

## **How is this drug best given?**

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

### **All products:**

- Give at bedtime.
- Give on an empty stomach.
- Give this drug with a full glass of water.
- Have your child swallow whole. Do not let your child chew or crush.
- It is important that your child does not miss or skip a dose of this drug during treatment.
- Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well.

### **Tablets:**

- Do not split or break tablet.
- If your child has trouble swallowing, talk with the doctor.

### **Capsules:**

- You may sprinkle contents of capsule on soft food like applesauce or yogurt as you were told by the doctor. Have your child swallow within 30 minutes of mixing. Do not let your child eat any more food for 2 hours after taking the dose.

## **What do I do if my child misses a dose?**

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.
- If you are not sure what to do if your child misses a dose, call the doctor.

## How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

## General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

## Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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