



# Etravirine

**nam** aidsmap

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## What is etravirine?

Etravirine is a medication used to treat HIV, marketed under the brand name *Intence*. It is taken in combination with other antiretroviral drugs.

The usual dose of etravirine is 400mg per day. You could take one 200mg tablet twice a day, or two 100mg tablets twice a day. Your doctor may recommend taking 400mg etravirine once a day. However, do not change to this dosage without consulting your doctor.

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## How does etravirine work?

Etravirine is from a class of drugs known as non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs). Your doctor will prescribe etravirine as part of your HIV treatment, along with antiretrovirals from another class of drugs. It is important to take all the drugs as prescribed, every day. Each drug class works against HIV in a different way.

The aim of HIV treatment is to reduce the level of HIV in your body (viral load). Ideally, your viral load should become so low that it is undetectable – usually less than 50 copies of virus per ml of blood. Taking HIV treatment and having an undetectable viral load protects your immune system and stops HIV being passed on to someone else during sex.

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## How do I take etravirine?

It is recommended that you take etravirine after a meal. If you take it on an empty stomach, much less of the drug will be absorbed into your system.

If you find it difficult to take the tablet whole, you can disperse it in a glass of water. Stir it well and drink it straight away. Add some more water and drink that too, to make sure you have taken the entire dose.

HIV treatment works best if you take it every day. When would be a good time for you to plan to take your treatment? Think about your daily routine and when you will find it easiest to take your treatment.

If you forget to take a dose of etravirine and you remember within six hours, take it as soon as you remember. If you notice after six hours, then don't take a double dose, just



skip the dose you've forgotten and carry on.

If you regularly forget to take your treatment, or you aren't taking it for another reason, it's important to talk to your doctor about this.

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## What are the possible side-effects of etravirine?

All drugs have possible side-effects. It's a good idea to talk to your doctor about possible side-effects before you start taking a drug. If you experience something that might be a side-effect, talk to your doctor about what can be done. A full list of side-effects, including less common side-effects, should be included in the leaflet that comes in the packaging with etravirine. If you have any questions, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

We generally divide side-effects into two types:

**Common** – a side-effect that occurs in at least one in a hundred people (more than 1%) who take this drug.

**Rare** – a side-effect that occurs in fewer than one in a hundred people (less than 1%) who take this drug.

The most common side-effects of etravirine are (most common in bold):

**Rash**, headache, peripheral neuropathy (damage to nerves in the hands or feet, causing tingling or numbness), tiredness, difficulty in sleeping, anxiety, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, indigestion and acid reflux, flatulence, abdominal pain, kidney failure, high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes, night sweats, raised blood sugar, triglyceride or cholesterol levels, anaemia, low platelet counts.

Rarely, etravirine can cause a hypersensitivity (allergic) reaction. If you develop a rash with other symptoms, such as a fever, blisters or swelling, seek medical advice.

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## Does etravirine interact with other drugs?

You should always tell your doctor and pharmacist about any other drugs or medication you are taking. That includes anything prescribed by another doctor, medicines you have bought from a high-street chemist, herbal and alternative treatments, and recreational or party drugs ('chems').

Some medicines or drugs are not safe if taken together – the interaction could cause increased, dangerous levels, or it could stop one or both of the drugs from working.



Other drug interactions are less dangerous but still need to be taken seriously. If levels of one drug are affected, you may need to change the dose you take. This must only be done on the advice of your HIV doctor.

A list of drugs, known to have interactions with etravirine, should be included in the leaflet that comes in the packaging with etravirine. Tell your doctor if you are taking any of these drugs, and other drugs that are not on the list.

You should not take etravirine with the anti-HIV drugs tipranavir/ritonavir, efavirenz, nevirapine, rilpivirine, indinavir, nelfinavir, atazanavir/cobicistat or darunavir/cobicistat. Other drugs that should not be taken with etravirine include:

- carbamazepine
- daclatasvir
- phenobarbital
- phenytoin
- rifampicin
- rifapentine
- simeprevir
- St John's wort.

Some drugs can interact with etravirine and change blood levels of one or both drugs, so dose adjustments may be needed. Drugs that this applies to include:

- amiodarone
- artemether/lumefantrine
- atorvastatin
- bepridil
- clarithromycin
- clopidogrel
- cyclosporine
- dexamethasone
- diazepam
- digoxin
- disopyramide
- flecainide
- fluconazole
- fluvastatin
- itraconazole
- ketoconazole
- lidocaine
- lovastatin
- mexiletine
- posaconazole
- propafenone
- quinidine
- rifabutin
- rosuvastatin
- sildenafil
- simvastatin
- sirolimus
- tacrolimus
- tadalafil
- vardenafil
- voriconazole
- warfarin.

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## Can I take etravirine in pregnancy?

There are other things which are important to your health and HIV care, and which you and your doctor may take into account when making decisions about your treatment. For example, if you are considering having a baby.

Etravirine may be considered as an option for women who want to get pregnant, or who



are pregnant, but other drugs have been studied more often in pregnancy. If you are planning to have a baby or think there is the possibility you might get pregnant, talk to your doctor about which drug combination would be best for you.

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## Talking to your doctor

If you have any concerns about your treatment or other aspects of your health, it's important to talk to your doctor about them.

For example, if you have a symptom or side-effect or if you are having problems taking your treatment every day, it's important that your doctor knows about this. If you are taking any other medication or recreational drugs, or if you have another medical condition, this is also important for your doctor to know about.

Building a relationship with a doctor may take time. You may feel very comfortable talking to your doctor, but some people find it more difficult, particularly when talking about sex, mental health, or symptoms they find embarrassing. It's also easy to forget things you wanted to talk about.

Preparing for an appointment can be very helpful. Take some time to think about what you are going to say. You might find it helpful to talk to someone else first, or to make some notes and bring them to your appointment. Our online tool *Talking points* may help you to prepare for your next appointment – visit [www.aidsmap.com/talking-points](http://www.aidsmap.com/talking-points)

*For detailed information on this drug, visit the [etravirine](#) pages in the HIV treatments directory.*

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We recommend that this information should always be used in conjunction with professional medical advice.

This factsheet is produced by an organisation called NAM, and has been reviewed by members of our volunteer panels of people living with HIV and medical professionals. We welcome your feedback on our information resources.

NAM provides up-to-date and impartial HIV information. Please visit us at our website where you can read the latest HIV news and sign up for free email updates.

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