

# Nelfinavir

*nel-FIN-a-veer*

**Brand Name:** Viracept

**Drug Class:** Protease Inhibitors

Nelfinavir, also known as Viracept, is a type of medicine called a protease inhibitor (PI). PIs act by blocking protease, a protein that HIV needs to make more copies of itself.

## HIV/AIDS-Related Uses

Nelfinavir was approved by the FDA on March 14, 1997, for use with other antiretroviral agents in the treatment of HIV infection in adults and children 2 years of age or older. It is also used for the prevention of HIV infection in individuals who have been exposed to the virus.

In June 2007, high levels of ethyl methanesulfonate (EMS), a chemical used during the making of nelfinavir, were detected in European-made nelfinavir by the European manufacturer Roche Ltd. The U.S. manufacturer Pfizer released a statement in September 2007 to inform doctors that some amounts of EMS have been detected in nelfinavir manufactured in the United States. EMS may cause cancer in humans; in animals, EMS has caused birth defects and cancer.

Effective March 31, 2008, Pfizer and FDA agreed upon a limit for EMS and agreed that nelfinavir is now safe for use in all patient populations including pregnant females and children.

This medicine does not cure HIV infection or AIDS and does not reduce the risk of passing the virus to other people.

## Dosage Form/Administration

Nelfinavir comes in tablet and powder form and is taken by mouth with food. Nelfinavir powder may be mixed with water, milk, formula, soy milk, and other dairy foods, such as pudding or ice cream.

## Recommended Daily Dose

The recommended adult dose of nelfinavir is 1,250 mg (five 250-mg tablets or two 625-mg tablets) twice a day or 750 mg (three 250-mg tablets) three times a day. The recommended dose of nelfinavir for children age 2 years and older is based on weight.

Some patients may benefit from different doses of nelfinavir. Patients should always take nelfinavir as prescribed by their doctors.

## Contraindications

Individuals should tell a doctor about any medical problems before taking this medicine.

## Possible Side Effects

Along with its desired effects, nelfinavir can cause some serious unwanted effects, including changes in body fat, high cholesterol, increased bleeding in patients with hemophilia, high sugar levels in the blood, and onset or worsening of diabetes. Individuals should tell a doctor if they have any of these side effects.

Other side effects may not be serious and may lessen or disappear with continued use of the medicine. Less serious side effects of this medicine include gas, mild to moderate diarrhea, nausea, and rash. Individuals should notify their doctor if these symptoms continue or are bothersome.

## Drug and Food Interactions

A doctor should be notified of any other medications being taken, including prescription, nonprescription (over-the-counter), or herbal medications.

## Clinical Trials

For information on clinical trials that involve Nelfinavir, visit the [ClinicalTrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) web site at <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov>. In the Search box, enter: Nelfinavir AND HIV Infections.

## Manufacturer Information

Nelfinavir  
Pfizer Inc  
235 East 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10017-5755  
(800) 438-1985

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## **Manufacturer Information (cont.)**

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## **For More Information**

Contact your doctor or an AIDSinfo Health Information Specialist:

- Via Phone: 1-800-448-0440 Monday - Friday, 12:00 p.m. (Noon) - 5:00 p.m. ET
- Via Live Help: [http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/live\\_help](http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/live_help) Monday - Friday, 12:00 p.m. (Noon) - 4:00 p.m. ET