

Etrasimod - Medication Information

What is etrasimod?

Etrasimod (brand name: Velsipity®) is a medication used to treat ulcerative colitis. It helps block inflammation-causing lymphocytes (white blood cells) from reaching the inflamed colon.

How is etrasimod given?

Etrasimod comes as a capsule, or pill, taken by mouth once a day. The dosage is 2 mg. It can be taken with or without food.

What should I do if I miss a dose of etrasimod?

If a dose is missed the same day, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If you remember the next day, skip the missed dose, and take your next dose at the usual time. Do not take 2 pills at the same time. If you miss a dose for more than 2 days, call your provider for instructions on what to do.

When can I expect etrasimod to work?

Some patients may feel an improvement in symptoms as soon as 2 weeks of starting etrasimod. Typically, up to 8-10 weeks may be required to see a benefit.

Etrasimod works for most patients. The medication may stop working in some patients every year. If a patient does not see an improvement in 8 weeks, an additional 4 to 6 weeks of etrasimod can be considered.

Studies have shown that early effective treatment for ulcerative colitis is associated with long-term benefits including lowering the likelihood of needing surgery or hospitalization for health problems related to ulcerative colitis.

What tests are needed while I am on etrasimod?

An eye exam when you first start on etrasimod is recommended. Your blood pressure and heart should also be checked when you first start on etrasimod and periodically after that. Your provider will have you get an EKG (electrocardiogram) test to monitor your heart rhythm. Blood counts and liver tests are done every 4 months while on etrasimod.

What are the potential side effects of etrasimod?

Side effects with etrasimod may include:

Liver injury: Changes in liver function can occur. This is not common and may occur in 1-2 out of 100 patients. Liver function should be monitored through blood tests every 3-4 months.

Increased blood pressure: Blood pressure may increase a little while on etrasimod. Your blood pressure will be monitored periodically while you are on treatment.

Heart rate and rhythm changes: Etrasimod can cause changes to your heart rate and rhythm. Patients with heart disease should be carefully monitored while on etrasimod.

Respiratory changes: Lowered lung function are not common but can occur. A lung function test called spirometry can be done if needed.

Allergic reaction: Patients taking etrasimod may experience an allergic reaction as with any other medication. Reactions may include rash, hives, or swelling of the lips or throat. This is uncommon and can be treated with steroid and antihistamine medications.

Drug-drug interaction: Many medications have interactions with etrasimod. This can affect how a medication works or cause side effects. It is important to discuss with your doctor or pharmacist about all the medications you are taking, whether they are prescribed to you or are taken over the counter.

Please see the medication package insert for the full list of potential side effects.

Is etrasimod safe during pregnancy and breastfeeding?

Animal studies have shown that etrasimod may be harmful to babies during pregnancy. Because of this, it is recommended to not use etrasimod during pregnancy. Additionally, wait 1 week after your last dose of etrasimod before trying to become pregnant.

It is unknown if etrasimod is found in breast milk. Based on the assumption that etrasimod is transferred into breast milk, talk with your provider about the potential risks and benefits when deciding whether to breastfeed while on the medication.

How can I take care of my health while on etrasimod?

It is important to be up to date with your health maintenance while on etrasimod. This includes being current on all the recommended vaccines such as the flu, COVID-19, pneumococcal, tetanus, and shingles vaccines. Specifically, you should consider getting the shingles vaccine. You should only get the recombinant shingles vaccine (brand name: Shingrix®). Do not get the older shingles vaccines that contain the live but weakened virus. You should not get any live virus vaccines while on etrasimod or for 3 months after stopping it.

It is also important to be up to date in your general cancer screening including mammograms and pap smears for women, and skin check-ups for both men and women.

Speak to your primary care doctor about whether you are up to date on all your vaccines and cancer screening.

What if my out-of-pocket costs are high with this treatment?

Our pharmacy team will work with you to see if you qualify for patient assistance and help with the application process.

The manufacturer of etrasimod has a copay assistance program called VelsipityForMe for patients on the medication. Please go to <https://www.velsipity.com/sign-up> for more information on this program.

There is also a program that may help cover screening tests required before starting etrasimod (EKG, laboratory tests, vaccines). That information is also available in the link provided above.

What if I have questions about etrasimod?

Talk with your provider about any questions or concerns you may have about etrasimod.

This document has been reviewed for plain language by Blum Center staff.

