

# Patient Information Leaflet

# Mycophenolate Mofetil

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## Aim of leaflet

This leaflet tells you about mycophenolate mofetil. It explains about what this medication is and what the possible risks of taking this medication are. It is not meant to replace an informed discussion between you and your healthcare provider, but can act as a starting point for such discussions. If you have any further questions, please ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.



## What is mycophenolate mofetil?

Mycophenolate is an immunosuppressant drug that is used to control your body's immune system. It is mainly used in patients who have had a liver transplant, but may be used in the management of autoimmune hepatitis.

Mycophenolate mofetil is often referred to as a “steroid sparing agent” or “immunomodulator” as it is often used to replace or reduce steroids.

## How does it work?

Mycophenolate reduces the activity of the immune system and suppresses inflammation. It is often used to replace steroids, which have long-term side effects.

Mycophenolate takes longer to work than steroids and usually takes about 6-8 weeks before it has its full effect.

## What dose do I take?

Mycophenolate comes as either tablets or capsules and is available in two different strengths: 250mg and 500mg.

Your doctor will advise you about the correct dose. A usual dose is 1-2g per day split as 2 doses. The dose may start off low and then be steadily increased depending on your response and if you develop side effects.



## **How do I take it?**

The capsules should be taken with a glass of water. You should take it with or soon after food.

Do not crush or chew the capsules. They should be swallowed whole, as it is not safe to breathe the powder.

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

It is important that you remember to take your medication every day. We advise you to use “adherence aids” such as a reminder app or alarm on your phone.

However, if more than six hours have passed from the time you usually take your dose, wait until your next dose is due. Do not double up the dose.

If you take too much mycophenolate mofetil please speak to your GP or the specialist for advice.

## **How long will I be taking it?**

This will depend on the reason why you have been prescribed mycophenolate mofetil and whether you are tolerating it. Do not stop taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to, even if you feel well.



## **What are the potential side effects?**

The most common side-effects of mycophenolate are nausea, diarrhoea and vomiting. Occasionally it may cause abdominal pain. Taking your total daily dose in divided doses throughout the day can reduce these symptoms. Any side effects should improve after a few weeks.

As mycophenolate mofetil affects your immune system this can cause you to develop anaemia, increase your risk of infections and make you more likely to bruise.

Other reported side effects include allergic reactions, high temperature, tiredness, headache, difficulty sleeping, hair loss, a rash and changes to blood pressure.

## **What should I do if I experience any side effects?**

If you experience any signs of infection, such as a high temperature above 37.5°C, a sore throat or cough, you should contact your GP, pharmacist or SWLU immediately. Please tell them that you are taking mycophenolate mofetil.

You should also seek medical attention if you develop side effects such as unexplained bruising, bleeding, shortness of breath, excessive tiredness, yellowing of your skin or whites of your eyes, or severe itching (signs of liver damage).

If you come into close contact with anyone who has chicken pox or shingles, please tell your GP as soon as possible.



## Is there a cancer risk with mycophenolate?

There is a slightly increased risk of certain types of cancer with mycophenolate mofetil, particularly lymphoma and skin cancer.

You should limit your exposure to sunlight and UV light, by wearing clothing that covers exposed skin and using high factor sunscreen.

## What blood tests will I need?

Blood tests are essential while taking mycophenolate mofetil, to check for any unwanted effects on your liver function or blood cell production.

When first starting mycophenolate mofetil you will require a blood test weekly for the first four weeks and then two weekly for the second month. If you are tolerating it well you will then have a blood test every 3 months.

## Does mycophenolate affect fertility or pregnancy?

The use of mycophenolate mofetil in pregnancy has been associated with birth defects and pregnancy loss, so should **NOT** be used in pregnancy.



If you are planning a family whilst taking this medication you must tell your doctor or nurse. Before starting mycophenolate mofetil:

- **If you are female** between the age 15 and 45 years old you will need to have two negative result pregnancy tests, carried out 8-10 days apart. These tests may be either urine or blood tests and will be arranged at the hospital.

You should use two effective methods of contraception (i.e. the contraceptive pill and barrier method, such as condoms), during treatment with mycophenolate mofetil and for 6 weeks after stopping treatment.

If you become pregnant whilst taking mycophenolate mofetil do not stop taking the medication. Contact your GP or SWLU immediately.

- **If you are male**

You should use condoms during treatment (even if you have had a vasectomy) and for at least 90 days after stopping treatment, as it can affect your sperm. Female partners of male patients treated with mycophenolate mofetil should use highly effective contraception during treatment and for 90 days after the last dose.

## **Taking mycophenolate with other medications**

Like many medications, mycophenolate mofetil can react with other drugs. It is therefore important that you inform your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you start taking other drugs, even those that you may buy over the counter.

## **Vaccinations**

You should avoid “live” vaccines e.g. measles, mumps, rubella (MMR combined vaccine) and yellow fever. Inactivated (“dead”) vaccines are acceptable, but you should discuss with your doctor or pharmacist first.

## **Can I drink alcohol with mycophenolate?**

Yes, it is safe. However, if you have been told that you have a liver condition it would be strongly advisable to reduce your alcohol intake and avoid drinking regularly.

## **Further questions or concerns.**

If you have any other questions about your treatment, or problems with your medication, please contact our Hepatology Department Helpline 01752 431320.





**This leaflet is available in large print and other formats and languages.**

**Contact: Administrator**

**Tel: 01752 431320**

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