

Acute Services Division



Information for patients about  
**Cyclosporin**

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## **Cyclosporin (other names Neoral, Sandimmun, Sangcya)**

Cyclosporin is more commonly known by brand (trade) names, for example Neoral. It is important to keep to the same brand unless your doctor advises otherwise.

### **Why am I being prescribed cyclosporin?**

Cyclosporin is commonly used for treatment of myasthenia gravis and chronic inflammatory demyelinating neuropathy (CIDP). It is also used for a number of other inflammatory conditions.

### **When do I take cyclosporin?**

Cyclosporin is usually taken in capsule form twice a day. It is also available as a liquid. You should not have grapefruit or grapefruit juice 1 hour before taking cyclosporin.

### **What dose do I take?**

Your doctor will advise you about the correct dose. Usually you will start on a low dose, and your doctor may increase this if necessary. The dose you are given will depend on your body weight and how well your kidneys are working. Your doctor will monitor your blood level of cyclosporin to help with prescribing the correct dose for you.

## **How long will cyclosporin take to work?**

Cyclosporin does not work immediately. It may take up to 4 months to produce a beneficial effect.

## **What are the possible side-effects?**

Two possible side-effects of cyclosporin are:

- A rise in blood pressure.
- Effects on the kidneys.

In some people cyclosporin can also cause:

- Sickness (nausea) and diarrhoea.
- Gum overgrowth.
- Tiredness.
- Excess hair growth.
- A mild tremor.
- A burning sensation of the hands and feet occurring early in treatment.

Cyclosporin can also affect the liver. Side-effects of cyclosporin may get better if the dose is reduced.

## **Do I need any special checks while on cyclosporin?**

Yes, because cyclosporin can affect the kidneys and blood pressure, your doctor will arrange for you to have regular blood tests and checks on

blood pressure. We may ask you to keep a record booklet with your test results. Please bring this with you when you visit your GP or the hospital. **You must not take cyclosporin unless you are having regular checks.**

Your doctor will also monitor the level of cyclosporin in your blood periodically. In order to interpret these results properly your doctor will ask you to miss the dose of cyclosporin immediately before your blood test. Typically this will involve having your blood test in the early morning **before** taking your morning dose of cyclosporin. You should take the dose the night before as usual, and once the blood is taken, you should take your morning dose.

Your doctor or practice nurse will send your blood, along with a blood test for your kidney function, to the hospital laboratory for analysis.

## **Can I take other medicines along with cyclosporin?**

Yes, many drugs can be taken safely with cyclosporin, but there are particular concerns about other drugs that can affect the kidneys. You should always tell any doctor treating you that you are taking cyclosporin. You should not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory painkillers (for example brufen or voltarol) without

first consulting your doctor. Do not take 'over-the-counter' preparations without discussing this first with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

## **Can I have vaccinations while on cyclosporin?**

It is recommended that you should not be immunised using any of the 'live' vaccines such as polio, rubella (German measles) and yellow fever.

An 'inactivated' polio vaccine can be given instead of the 'live' polio vaccine and the 'inactivated' version should also be given to people you are in close contact with, such as members of your household. If you are on cyclosporin you should avoid contact with children who have been given the 'live' polio vaccine, for 4-6 weeks after vaccination.

Yearly flu vaccines and pneumovax are safe and recommended. Tetanus vaccine is safe.

## **Does cyclosporin affect pregnancy?**

It is best not to take cyclosporin when pregnant. If you are planning a family or if you become pregnant while taking cyclosporin you should discuss this with your doctor as soon as possible. You should not breastfeed while taking cyclosporin.

## **May I drink alcohol while taking cyclosporin?**

Yes, there is no particular reason for you to avoid alcohol while taking cyclosporin.

## **Where can I obtain further information?**

If you would like any further information about cyclosporin, or if you have any concerns about your treatment, you should discuss this with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

**Remember to keep all medications out of the reach of children.**