
What is it?

Mycophenolate Mofetil (MMF), sometimes known as Cellcept, is a drug that has been used to treat patients who have inflammation following transplant or organs such as the heart, kidney and liver. Their immune cells need to be 'switched off' to stop them from attacking the donor organ. Clinical studies have shown that this drug can also prevent inflammation in the eye.

When should MMF not be used?

(Or only after discussion with your consultant)

- If you are or think you may be pregnant
- If you have liver or kidney disease
- If you are breast feeding
- If you have recently had or are about to have vaccinations
- If you are on oral anti-coagulants such as warfarin or anti-gout agents such as allopurinol

When should you be careful of taking MMF?

Be sure to tell your doctor if:

- You have any unexplained bruising or bleeding
- You have episodes of infection
- You are on any other medication
- You have been in contact with chicken pox or shingles or developed them yourself – seek medical advice immediately as you may need to take a course of anti-viral medication

You should try to reduce your exposure to infections. This can be done by:

- Avoiding close contact with people you know have an infection.
- Washing your hands regularly and carrying around a small bottle of antibacterial hand gel.
- Keeping your mouth clean by brushing your teeth regularly.
- Stopping smoking if you're a smoker.

- Making sure your food is stored and prepared properly.
- Trying to keep your house clean and hygienic, especially the kitchen, bathrooms and toilets.

Can I have immunisations whilst taking MMF?

If you're taking mycophenolate, you should avoid live vaccines, such as yellow fever. However, in certain situations a live vaccine may be necessary, so speak to your pharmacist or doctor about this for their advice.

It's a good idea to get the pneumococcal vaccine, to protect you against the most common cause of pneumonia, and your yearly flu vaccines. These are both safe to have while you're being treated with mycophenolate

Covid-19 vaccine offered in UK do not contain live viruses, and therefore safe to take.

How should MMF be taken?

Always take the tablets as your doctor instructs. Swallow the tablets whole, do not suck or chew them.

Your specialist will tell you what dose to take which may change continually. Dosage usually starts at 500mg twice a day, increases gradually according to your response to the medication to achieve the most effective dose to treat your condition. At its peak, you will be taking between 1-3 grams per day, depending on your body weight and your response therapy. It works slowly and may take up to several weeks to take full effect.

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you realise, as long as it is within 6 hours of your usual time. If it is more than 6 hours, then skip the missed dose and take the next dose at its usual time. **Do not double the dose.**

If you take too many tablets or someone else accidentally takes your medicine, contact your doctor, pharmacist or the nearest hospital straight away.

What are the possible side effects?

Normally this treatment is tolerated well. You may, however, have some unwanted reactions. Initially, you may feel nauseated after taking the tablets, which is often relieved by taking them after food.

General tiredness can occur at first but wears off after continued use.

Sickness, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain can also occur initially but wears off with continued use of reduced dose.

Mycophenolate weakens your immune system, and therefore can increase your risk of infection. If you develop any signs of illness or side effects such as infection, unexplained bruising, bleeding sore throat, mouth ulcers or fever then contact your doctor or pharmacist immediately.

Occasionally, people experience a slight shake, headache or muscle pain.

There are other less common effects including agitation and anxiety, impaired liver function and jaundice. Lymphoma has been reported but is very rare. In cases of serious effects, the treatment is stopped completely.

Although it's uncommon, there's a slightly increased risk of certain types of cancer, such as skin cancer, in people using mycophenolate. However, the link between the two is unclear.

Skin cancers can often be treated successfully when diagnosed early. To be on the safe side, make sure to wear sunscreen and regularly check your skin for any new spots or changes to your freckles or moles.

Very rarely, patients treated with mycophenolate can develop a serious condition called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy, also known as PML, which can damage the brain and spinal cord. You must see your doctor immediately if you notice any of the following symptoms:

- pins and needles
- weakness, shaky movements or unsteadiness
- sight loss
- speech problems
- changes in behaviour or mood
- difficulty moving your face, arms or legs

Does MMF affect fertility or pregnancy?

We advise all woman of child-bearing age who are taking immunosuppressive treatments to avoid pregnancy as some drugs can increase the risk of birth defects and/or developmental problems. Men taking immunosuppressive treatments may also need to take precautions. The most appropriate form of contraception depends on the medications you are taking so please ask us for advice. Please let us know if you wish to plan a family so that we can discuss treatment options with you.

Monitoring while on Mycophenolate

Mycophenolate can affect the blood count and can sometimes cause liver or kidney problems. As a precaution, your doctor will arrange for you to have a blood test before you start treatment and regular blood tests while you're taking mycophenolate. Initially in most cases blood tests are carried out every 2 to 4 weeks then every 2-3 months after the first few months. Keep a note of when your blood tests are due and remind your doctor about them. Levels return to normal when treatment is reduced or stopped.

If you experience any problems relating to the drug, contact your GP or Eye department at the Royal Gwent Hospital:

Urgent Referral Clinic (Mon-Fri 08:30-17:30) – 01633 238856

Mrs Mitra's secretary – 01633 238155

Mrs Reynold's secretary – 01633 234885

Ms Sharma's secretary – 01633 238443

Uveitis Specialist Nurse (Claire Smith) – 01633 238856

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg".**