

Patient Information

Tacrolimus

Eye Unit

What is Tacrolimus?

Tacrolimus (Prograf) is a drug extracted from a fungus. It has been used to treat patients who have inflammation following transplant of organs such as hearts and kidneys. Their immune cells need to be 'switched off' to stop them attacking the donor organ. Clinical studies have shown that Tacrolimus can also prevent inflammation within the eye.

When should Tacrolimus 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 anti-coagulants such as Warfarin.
- If you have diabetes.

When should you be careful taking Tacrolimus?

Be sure to tell your doctor if:

- You have heart disease
- You have any history of disease of the nervous system
- You have episodes of infection
- You are on any other medication especially painkillers

Can I have immunisations while I am on Tacrolimus?

You should avoid immunisation with live vaccines such as:-

- Oral Polio
- Rubella (German Measles)
- Yellow Fever
- Oral Typhoid
- Tuberculosis

It is safe to have these immunisations:-

- Hepatitis
- Influenza
- Tetanus
- Pneumo-vaccine
- Meningo-vaccine
- Injected Polio
- Injected Typhoid

How should Tacrolimus be taken?

- Swallow tablets whole, do not suck or chew them.
- Always take the tablets as your Doctor directs.
- Your specialist will tell you how much medicine to take. The dose may change continually.
- You will be taking between 2-6 mg per day. This depends on your body weight and response to therapy.
- If you miss a dose take it as soon as you realise. However if you do not realise until the next day, skip the missed dose and carry on as before. **Do not take 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.

Does Tacrolimus affect fertility or pregnancy?

We advise all women 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.

What are the possible side effects?

Normally the treatment is tolerated well. You may, however, have some unwanted reactions; some of these will wear off as your treatment continues.

Initially you may feel nausea after tablets, which is often relieved by taking them after food.

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

You may observe a tremor of the hands that can persist.

Your blood count and kidney function is monitored regularly with blood tests because Tacrolimus may cause kidney damage. The drug dose is then reduced or stopped. Levels return to normal when this is done.

Occasionally people experience headache or muscle pains.

There are other less common effects including agitation, impaired liver function and jaundice. Some people have an increased incidence of infections, both viral and bacterial, so it is important to inform your Doctor if you feel at all unwell.

Lymphoma has been reported but is very rare. In cases of serious effects the treatment is stopped completely.

If you experience any problems related to the drug, contact your GP or Eye Dept., at the Royal Gwent Hospital –

Urgent referrals - Out of hours:- 01633 – 238856

Further Information:-

There is a patient Uveitis information and self help group that supplies leaflets and newsletters for you to contact if you wish.

Uveitis Information Group
South House
Sweening
Vidlein
Shetland Isles
ZE2 9QE

Email: info@uveitis.net

Website: www.uveitis.net

**“This document is available in Welsh /
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**