

## Mycophenolate (CellCept) Patient Information Sheet

### Why am I prescribed mycophenolate?

Mycophenolate is used in the treatment of several different types of rheumatic disease, including systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) and diseases in which there is inflammation of blood vessels (vasculitis). It works by reducing the activity of the body's immune system (the body's own defense system) so it is always used with care.

### When do I take mycophenolate?

Mycophenolate is usually taken in capsule form twice a day. The capsules should be taken with a glass of water 1 hour before or 2 hours after meals. They should be swallowed whole and not crushed or chewed.

Sometimes mycophenolate is given in injection form into a vein. This medicine must be given slowly through an IV infusion and can take at least 2 hours to complete.

### How long will mycophenolate take to work?

Mycophenolate does not work immediately. It may be 12 weeks or longer before you notice any benefit.

### What dose should I take?

Your doctor will advise you about the correct dose.

### What should I do if I forget to take a dose?

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember it. However, if it is nearly time for the next dose, skip the missed dose. **Do not take a double dose to make up for a forgotten tablet.**

Mycophenolate is not a painkiller. So if you are already on an anti-inflammatory drug or painkillers you may continue to take these as well, unless your doctor advises otherwise.

### What are the possible side-effects?

The most common side-effects of mycophenolate are nausea, diarrhoea, increase in blood pressure, headache, vomiting or stomach pain. Mycophenolate can also affect your blood count (one of the effects is that fewer blood cells are made) and can make you more likely to develop infections. If you develop a **sore throat** or **other infection**, or if you have a **fever**, if you develop **unexplained bruising or bleeding**, or if you develop any **new symptoms** after starting mycophenolate you should see your doctor.

If you have not had chickenpox but come into contact with someone who has chickenpox or shingles, or if you develop chickenpox or shingles while you are taking mycophenolate, you should see your doctor immediately as you may need special treatment.

There is a slightly increased risk of certain types of cancer with mycophenolate. Discuss this with your doctor. Because of the small increase in risk of skin cancer, you should avoid exposure to strong sunlight and protect your skin with sunblock of SPF 30 or higher. Avoid the use of sun beds while taking mycophenolate.

### Do I need any special checks while on mycophenolate?

Because mycophenolate can affect the blood count, and can sometimes cause liver or kidney problems, your doctor will arrange for you to have a blood test before you start treatment and then regular blood checks while on mycophenolate. This is very important. You may be asked to keep a record booklet with your blood test results and you should bring this with you when you visit your GP or the hospital.

**You must not take mycophenolate unless you are having regular checks.**

### Can I take other medicines along with mycophenolate?

Some drugs interact with mycophenolate so you should always let any doctor treating you know that you are taking it. Indigestion remedies, including some 'over-the-counter' preparations, can stop mycophenolate being absorbed so please leave a gap of 4 hours between taking them.

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

### Can I have vaccinations while on mycophenolate?

It is recommended that you should not be immunised using any of the 'live' vaccines such as polio, rubella 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 mycophenolate 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.

### Does mycophenolate affect fertility or pregnancy?

You should not take mycophenolate when pregnant and you should not become pregnant for at least 6 weeks after stopping mycophenolate. If you are planning a family or if you become pregnant while taking mycophenolate, you should discuss this with your doctor as soon as possible.

Women who are capable of becoming pregnant must have two negative pregnancy tests **before** starting mycophenolate treatment. Mycophenolate may reduce the levels of the oral contraceptive pill in the blood so you should use **2 types of birth control for 1 month** prior to starting mycophenolate and for 6 weeks after stopping mycophenolate.

Although no adequate studies have been carried out on women for determining infant risk when using this medication during breast feeding, you should not breastfeed if you are taking mycophenolate. The drug may pass into the breast milk and could be harmful to your baby.

### May I drink alcohol while taking mycophenolate?

If you drink alcohol you should only do so in small amounts because mycophenolate can affect your liver.

### Contact Details

Dr. S. Harney, Consultant Rheumatologist ( <i>secretary</i> ):	(021) 4922422
Dr. J. Ryan, Consultant Rheumatologist ( <i>secretary</i> ):	(021) 4922468
Mary Daly, Advanced Nurse Practitioner in Rheumatology	(021) 4922817
Louise Murphy, Acting Clinical Nurse Specialist in Rheumatology	(021) 4920250

**Always Remember!**

**Check the dose of your mycophenolate tablets printed on the medicine container. Keep all medicines out of reach of children.**

**Please note that this information leaflet does not list all the side effects of mycophenolate. Always read the drug information leaflet which comes with your medicine.**