

Making your kidney Count

Immunosuppressant Medications




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HEALTH • EDUCATION • RESEARCH صحة • تعليم • بحوث

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Immunosuppressant

Q. What are immunosuppressants?

Immunosuppressant is a term used to describe a number of drugs or medicines that suppress or lower the body's ability to reject a transplanted organ. Another term for these drugs is anti-rejection drugs. Examples of immunosuppressant used for kidney transplants are cyclosporine, azathioprine, prednisone and Prograf, Mycophenolate.

Q. What are immunosuppressants used for?

When you get a kidney transplant, your body knows that the new kidney is foreign (this is not an original part of the body). Your body will attack the new kidney and try to damage or destroy it. The immunosuppressant drugs suppress your body's ability to do this.

Q. Does everyone who gets a new kidney have to take immunosuppressant?

Almost everyone who has a transplant must take these drugs everyday as directed. If your new kidney came from an identical twin, however, you may not have to take them. Even missing a single dose may make it more likely for you to have a rejection. The only time you should skip a dose is if your doctor or other healthcare team members tell you to do so. If you are not sure, call your doctor.

Because of the large number of pills that the transplant patients may need to take each day, forgetting a dose can easily happen. There are ways to be done in order to prevent this:

First, you must know the name of each drug you take and what it does. If you have a good understanding of your drugs, you will be less likely to forget one. The second thing to do is you can use a pill box or pill organizer. This is a device that allows you to set-up an entire week of pills. Once it is set up, all you have to do is take the pills at the right time of the day.

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Q. What should I do if I miss a dose?

Take it as soon as you remember.

If it is time for the next dose, do not take a double dose.

Q. Are there any signs of symptoms I should watch for?

Yes. Even though you are taking your medicines everyday, you may still develop rejection of the kidney transplant. You need to know your body well. If you have any of the following, you should call your transplant center right away:

- a drop in your urine amount
- a fever above 37.7°C
- tenderness over of your new kidney
- blood in urine
- flu-like feeling
- weight gain (more than 1.3 kg in two days)

The transplant center will probably ask you to have some blood tests and maybe some other tests. The long-term success of your kidney transplant depends largely on careful follow-up and a good working relationship between you and your transplant team.

Q. Am I more likely to get an infection because I am on these drugs?

A. Yes. One of the side effects of these drugs is an increased risk of infections. This is more of a problem in the early period after a transplant or following treatment of a rejection because the dosage of these drugs is higher at these times. You should call the doctor or the transplant coordinator if you have:

- fever above 37.7°C
- drainage from your surgical scar
- burning sensation when you pass urine
- a cough that will not go away

Mycophenolate:

US Brand Name, CellCept®

Q. What is this medicine used for?

This medicine is used to prevent rejection after organ transplant

Q. How does it work?

- Mycophenolate helps the body accept a transplanted organ
- It decreases the immune system

Q. How is this best taken?

- Take this medicine on an empty stomach. Take one hour before or two hours after meals.
- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break or crush.

Q. What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as possible
- If it is almost time for the next dose, skipped the missed dose and return to your regular schedule
- Do not take a double dose or extra doses
- Do not change dose, brand or even stop the medicine
- Talk to your healthcare provider

Q. What are the precautions when taking this medicine?

- A. If you have had an ulcer or bleeding from your stomach or intestines, talk to your healthcare provider.
- Check medicines with your healthcare provider. This medicine may not mix well with other medicines.
- Talk to a healthcare provider before receiving any vaccinations. Use with this medicine may either increase the risk of serious infection or make the vaccination less effective.
- Do not take antacids, or iron within two hours from taking this medicine.
- You may bleed more easily. Be careful. Avoid injury. Use soft toothbrush, electric razor.
- Use sunscreen; wear protective clothing and eyewear.

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Q. What are some possible effects of this medicine?

High blood pressure

- Risk of infection; avoid people with infections, cold or flu
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting; small frequent meals, frequent mouth care, sucking hard, sugar-free candy, or chewing sugar-free gum may help
- Anemia, low white blood cell count, and low platelet count
- Diarrhea
- Swelling

Q. How should I store this medicine?

- Store at room temperature
- Protect from light
- Protect capsules and tablets from moisture. Do not store in a bathroom or kitchen.

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Tacrolimus:

US Brand Name, Prograf®

Q. What is this medicine used for?

This medicine is used to prevent rejection after organ transplant

Q. How does it work?

- Tacrolimus helps the body accept a transplanted organ
- It decreases the immune system

Q. How is this best taken?

Oral:

- Take this medicine on an empty stomach. Take one hour before or two hours after meals
- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush

Q. What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Take the missed dose as soon as possible
- If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular schedule
- Do not use a double dose or extra doses
- Do not change dose or stop the medicine. Talk to your healthcare provider

Q. What are the precautions when taking this medicine?

All forms:

- Check medicines with a healthcare provider. This medicine may not mix well with other medicines
- You can get sunburned more easily. Avoid sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen; wear protective clothing and eyewear
- Avoid alcohol (includes wine, beer and liquor)
- Tell your healthcare provider if you are pregnant or plan of getting pregnant
- Do not take antacids, cholestyramine, or colestipol within two hours of taking this medicine.
- Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice

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Q. What are some of the possible side effects of this medicine?

- High blood pressure
- Worsening kidney function
- Risk of infection; avoid people with infections, colds or flu
- Feeling dizzy; rise slowly over several minutes from sitting or lying position. Be careful in climbing
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting; small frequent meals, frequent mouth care, sucking hard, sugar-free candy chewing sugar-free gum may help.
- Diarrhea
- Inability to sleep
- Sunburn
- The risk of tumor is higher after using this medicine

Q. How should I store this medicine?

- Store at room temperature.
- Protect capsules from moisture. Do not store in the bathroom or in the kitchen

Cyclosporine

US Brand Name: Neoral[®]

Q. What is this medicine used for?

This medicine is used to prevent rejection after organ transplant

Q. How does it work?

- Cyclosporine helps the body accept a transplanted organ
- It decreases the immune system

Q. How is it best taken?

Swallow whole. Do not chew, break or crush

You may take this medicine with or without food. Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice while you are using this medicine

Q. What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as possible
- If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular schedule
- Do not take a double dose or extra doses
- Do not change dose, brand, or stop taking the medicine. Talk to your healthcare provider

Q. What are some of the possible side effects of this medicine?

- High blood pressure
- Worsening kidney function
- Risk of infection; avoid people with infections, colds and flu
- Headache
- Belly pain
- Nausea or vomiting; small frequent meals, frequent care, sucking hard, sugar-free, or chewing sugar-free gum may help
- Diarrhea
- Hair growth
- Eye irritation

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Q. How should I store this medicine?

- Store in original container at room temperature
- Protect capsules from moisture. Do not store in the bathroom or kitchen

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Azathioprine: Imuran®

Q. What is this medicine used for?

This medicine is used to prevent rejection after organ transplant

Q. How does it work?

- Azathioprine helps the body accept a transplanted organ
- It decreases the immune system

Q. How is this best taken?

Take this medicine with or without food. Take with food if it causes an upset stomach

Q. What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as possible
- If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular schedule
- Do not take a double dose or extra doses

Q. How should I store this medicine?

Oral:

- Store at room temperature
- Protect tablets from moisture. Do not store in the bathroom or in the kitchen

Prednisolone

Q. What is this medicine used for?

This medicine is used to treat organ transplantation

Q. How does it work?

- Prednisolone replaces an important chemical produced in the body
- It blocks the allergic reaction by minimizing or preventing the body's reaction to the allergen
- It prevents or reduces irritation and swelling
- It decreases the immune system

Q. How is this best taken?

Oral:

- Take this medicine in the morning if you are taking it once a day
- Take this medicine with food to prevent stomach upset

Q. What do I do if I missed a dose?

- Take a missed dose as soon as possible
- If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular schedule
- Do not take a double dose or extra doses
- Do not change dose or stop taking the medicine. Talk to your healthcare provider

Q. What are the precautions when taking this medicine?

Oral:

- If you have been taking this medicine for several weeks, talk to your healthcare provider before stopping.
- You may want to gradually withdraw this medicine
- Talk to your healthcare provider before receiving any vaccinations. Taking medicine may either increase the risk of serious infection or make the vaccination less effective
- Avoid exposure to chicken pox or measles
- Do not take antacid within two hours of taking this medicine
- If you have diabetes, talk to your healthcare provider. This medicine can increase blood sugar

Q. What are some possible side effects of this medicine?

Oral:

- High blood sugar; usually reverse when stopped
- Risk of infection; avoid people with infections, colds or flu
- Belly pain
- Nausea or vomiting; small frequent meals, frequent mouth care, sucking hard, sugar-free candy, or chewing sugar-free gum may help
- Weight gain
- Mood changes
- Change in body fat distribution
- Weakened bones with long-term use
- Muscle weakness
- Skin changes (acne, stretch marks, slow healing, hair growth)
- Cataract or glaucoma with long-term use
- For females, vaginal yeast infection; report itching or discharge

Q. How should I store this medicine?

Oral:

- Store at room temperature
- Protect tablets from moisture. Do not store in the bathroom or in the kitchen



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