

Taking Ciclosporin for eye (ocular) inflammation

Department of Ophthalmology

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Information for Patients

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What is Ciclosporin?

Ciclosporin is a drug that reduces redness and swelling (inflammation) in the eye. It is given to patients who have this condition as it has proved to be useful in controlling the symptoms of the illness.

Ciclosporin is a 'generic medicine'. This means it may be available under different brand names. We prescribe the brand of Ciclosporin called Neoral which is available as capsules (25mg, 50mg and 100mg).

Please note: It is important that you read the manufacturer's leaflet as well as for this one. It will contain general information about the drug that you will need to know. Please remember that it is not written for patients with eye conditions, so some of the information in it may not be relevant to you.

Why have I been given Ciclosporin?

You have been given this drug to improve your eye condition. It is not a pain reliever and does not work straight away. It improves the symptoms over a longer period of time.

If you are on painkillers or anti-inflammatory drugs, it is important that you continue to take them unless your doctor tells you otherwise.

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

How will it help me?

Ciclosporin helps calm down the swelling and irritation caused by your illness. It does this by slowing down certain cells in your body that normally fight infections.

What dose should I take?

Ciclosporin is often taken 2 times a day, in equal doses. You take it with food. Do not break or crush them. Do not take any that are broken or split. Your doctor will advise you about the exact dose.

You may start on a low strength dose of Ciclosporin. This may be increased when we see you in clinic. It can take 6 to 12 weeks for it to start to work. This is because the level of drug needs to build up in your blood over time.

Do not change the dose. If you stop taking the drug contact the specialist nurse. Whilst taking Ciclosporin do not buy medicines over the counter without getting advice.

You should avoid grapefruit juice and grapefruit whilst taking Ciclosporin.

Are there any side effects?

All drugs have side effects, although most patients do not get any.

Side effects include:

- Less hungry (low appetite)
- Feeling tired
- Diarrhoea / nausea / vomiting
- Fever / flushing
- Body hair growth
- Headache
- Hair loss / thinning
- Tender gums
- Tingling (especially in hands and feet). This often happens within the first week of treatment.

There are some more uncommon risks that you need to be aware of Ciclosporin as it may:

- Affect your kidneys
- Cause anaemia
- Lead to a shakiness of hands (slight tremor)
- Cause a rise in blood pressure
- Cause muscle weakness
- Increase risk of infections
- There is a risk of getting a type of cancer that affects the glands in your body that help fight infections (lymphatic glands, lymphoma).

Vaccines

If you need a vaccine (immunisation), you must tell your GP that you are on this medication. This is because some 'live' vaccines should not be given to patients on Ciclosporin. You must not have these vaccines:

- Chicken Pox vaccine (Varicella Zoster)
- Oral Typhoid
- Oral Polio
- MMR (measles, mumps and rubella)
- BCG (Tuberculosis (TB))
- Yellow fever

The following immunisations are not 'live' and can be given although they may be less effective whilst you are on this drug:

- Hepatitis (A and B)
- Flu (influenza)
- Absorbed diphtheria (low dose) and tetanus vaccines for adults and adolescents
- Pneumococcal vaccine
- Hib (Haemophilus Influenza B)
- Typhoid
- Meningococcal vaccines

Blood tests

You **must** have blood tests to make sure the drugs are not affecting your body.

If you do not have the blood tests we will need to stop the Ciclosporin.

You can book blood test at your GP. Or you can come to the Leicester Royal Infirmary and walk in to the Balmoral Test Centre.

We need to do a blood test before you take your tablets for the day. You should have your blood test at 9am and take your tablet at 10am. We need to know what drug is in your blood. This helps us make sure the dose is correct.

You will have a blood test every 2 weeks for the first 6 weeks. Then you will have a blood test monthly while you are taking the drug.

Blood form is a request form for a blood test. We will give you blood forms in clinic to start with. You will then need to contact the specialist nurse to get more blood forms. This will be posted to you.

Can I start a family?

If you want to start a family, you should talk to your doctor as soon as possible. You may need to come off your medication.

If you decide to stop taking Ciclosporin so you can start a family, you will need to continue to have protected sex for 3 months after you come off your medication. Talk to your GP about effective forms of contraception.

If you are on Ciclosporin and think you might be pregnant, or if you plan to become pregnant, you should see your GP for advice. If you are a breast-feeding person, please let your doctor know about this before starting treatment.

Can I take other drugs or medicines?

Some drugs may interact with Ciclosporin.

You should always tell any doctor treating you that you are taking Ciclosporin.

You should not take 'over the counter' preparations without taking with your doctor or pharmacist first.

Can I drink alcohol?

Alcohol has no effect on the drug. You are advised not to drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week, spread evenly over 3 or more days, on a regular basis. **You only need to avoid grapefruit juice and grapefruit.**

Is there anything else I should avoid while taking this?

You should avoid being out in the sun for long periods of time. Wear sun protective clothing, sunglasses and sunscreen ideally SPF 50. Ciclosporin may make your skin sensitive to sunlight and can increase your chance of skin cancer. Do not use sun beds.

You should avoid contact with anyone who has chickenpox or shingles especially if you have not had these infections before. If you get chickenpox or shingles you should stop taking your medication and get medical advice right away.

If you have any concern about your treatment, you should talk with your doctor or nurses practitioner.

What happens if I miss a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember. Do not double the dose. Do not take any more within 10 hours. Try to keep to regular times to minimise missing doses.

Is there anything else I need to know?

You should get urgent medical advice straight away if you get any of the following:

- Unexplained, bruising or bleeding or a rash.
- A change in the colour and amount of pee.
- Confusion or any unusual changes to your behaviour or personality.
- Sore throat or breathlessness, infection or cough.
- High temperature.



Can I drive?

You may feel sleepy, disoriented, or have blurred vision after taking Ciclosporin.
Do not drive or operate machinery if this happens.

Who should I contact if I have any concerns?

If you have any concerns or questions about this treatment you can contact:

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Uveitis Nurse Specialist: 0793 997 8826 / 0748 499 1154

Corneal Nurses Specialist: 0797 094 0125

Eye Casualty Department: 0116 258 6273

Ophthalmology Secretary (uveitis): 0116 258 6198

Ophthalmology Secretary (cornea): 0116 258 5913

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