

Taking Tacrolimus for eye (ocular) inflammation

Department of Ophthalmology

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Information for Patients

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What is Tacrolimus?

Tacrolimus is a drug that can be helpful for people with eczema, allergic conditions (called atopy), and also eye inflammation (Uveitis). It is given to patients who have this condition as it has proved to be useful in controlling the symptoms of the illness.

It may be available under different brand names. We prescribe the brand of tacrolimus called **Prograf**. This is available as capsules (0.5mg, 1mg, and 5mg). Different brands may work differently. It is important you have the Prograf brand when you collect your prescription.

Please note: it is important that you read the manufacturer's leaflet. This is because it contains 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 tacrolimus?

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 of your condition over a longer period of time.

If you are on painkillers or anti-inflammatory drugs, it is important that you should carry on taking 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

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

How will it help me?

Tacrolimus 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.

Some types of conditions can cause inflammation in the eye which can be painful. Tacrolimus aims to reduce these symptoms. It is also used to stop rejection of a corneal transplant. You need to carry on taking Tacrolimus unless you are told to stop by a doctor.

If you stop taking Tacrolimus please contact the nurse specialist in your eye department.

What dose should I take?

Tacrolimus is often taken 2 times a day. You should take this at 10am and 10pm. You should take them with food or just after 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 should make sure you are only given **Prograf**. Other types of Tacrolimus work differently.

You may start on a low strength dose of Tacrolimus. This may be increased at follow-up appointments. It can take a few weeks to start to work. This is because the level of drug builds up in your blood over time.

Do not change or adjust your dose unless your doctor has told you to. Tacrolimus is affected by some antibiotics. Tell your doctor if you are taking antibiotic medication. Whilst taking Tacrolimus do not use any over-the-counter medicines without getting advice from your GP.

If you forget to take Tacrolimus do not take a double dose to make up for the forgotten dose. Wait until it is time for the next dose, and then continue as normal.

Are there any side effects or risks?

All drugs have side effects. Most patients do not get any.

Side effects include:

- feeling sick (nausea)
- diarrhoea
- skin rash
- stomach ache
- headache
- difficulty sleeping (insomnia)
- dizziness

Other risks include:

- Lower iron levels (anaemia).
- Affects on the liver and kidneys (monitored by regular blood tests).
- Infections. Contact your GP if you think you may have any kind of infection. Infection can be more serious when taking this drug.
- Hair loss / thinning hair.
- Diabetes. **Please get medical attention right away** if you are having signs of high blood sugar such as:
 - confusion,
 - feeling sleepy,
 - increased thirst,
 - increased hunger,
 - passing pee more often,
 - flushing,
 - fast breathing,
 - breath that smells like fruit.
- There is a small risk of getting a type of cancer that affects the glands in your body that help fight infections (lymphatic glands, lymphoma). Look out for any changes in skin or any new lumps. Wear a high factor sun cream (SPF 50) and cover up when you are in the sun.
- Effects on the rhythm of the heart. Rarely Tacrolimus can affect your heart or kidney function. If you have shortness of breath, a lasting cough or foot/ankle swelling, contact your doctor right away.
- High blood pressure (we monitor this in clinic or you can monitor it at home).

What should I avoid or be aware of while taking Tacrolimus?

- Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice.
- Avoid long exposure to UV light including sunlight. The drug can make it more likely for you to get sun burnt. Try covering the skin and use of total sunblock (SPF 50 or above).
- The drug can affect the unborn child and pass through milk if breastfeeding. You will be asked to avoid getting pregnant and stop breastfeeding while on the medication.
- Tacrolimus lowers your bodies ability to fight infection. If you have any signs of infection, such as a temperature or cough you need to see your GP. Any infection can be worse, and make you feel ill for longer. A letter will be sent to your GP to tell them that you are taking tacrolimus.

Vaccinations

We advise you to have these vaccines:

- flu (influenza),
- Covid-19 vaccine,
- pneumonia (pneumovax II) vaccine.

Please get these from your GP as normal.

You should not have any live vaccines. This includes:

- Oral polio,
- MMR (measles, mumps and rubella),
- BCG (Tuberculosis),
- Chicken Pox (Varicella Zoster),
- Oral Typhoid
- Yellow Fever

Please speak to your GP before getting a shingles vaccines. This is because it needs to be the **non-live** version of the vaccine.

Your body's ability to fight an infection can be reduced while you are taking Tacrolimus. You should avoid close contact with people who have viral infections. Stay away from people who have chicken pox or shingles. Make sure to do this if you have not had these infections before. If you get either of these, you should tell your doctor right away and get medical advice.

Can I drive?

Do not drive or use any tools or machines if you feel dizzy, sleepy, or have problems seeing clearly after taking Tacrolimus. These effects are more likely if you have alcohol.

Food preparation

There are some reports of germs (bacteria) found in food that may cause a problem to those who are less able to fight infections. Your body's resistance to infection can be reduced while you are taking Tacrolimus.

You should cook meat thoroughly. Avoid raw seafood such as oysters and sushi. Make sure you wash yours salads well with hot water. Avoid ready-prepared supermarket salads. Do not eat unpasteurized dairy products like brie, camembert.



Having regular blood tests

Blood test must be done **before** you take your tablet. For example your blood can be at 9am before you take your tablet at 10am.

This is because we need to know the amount of drug in your blood. This helps us make sure the dose is correct.

If you are taking Tacrolimus you will need to have regular blood tests to check that the drug is not negatively affecting your body. If you do not have regular blood tests we will need to stop the Tacrolimus.

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.

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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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

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