Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Mycophenolate

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

CellCept; CellCept Intravenous; Myfortic; Myhibbin

Brand Names: Canada

ACH-Mycophenolate; APO-Mycophenolate; APO-Mycophenolic Acid; CellCept; CellCept IV; JAMP-Mycophenolate; JAMP-Mycophenolic Acid; MAR-Mycophenolate Mofetil; MAR-Mycophenolic Acid; Myfortic; SANDOZ Mycophenolate Mofetil; TEVA-Mycophenolate

Warning

- Use of this drug during pregnancy may cause birth defects or death of the unborn baby. You will need to have a pregnancy test right before you start this drug and again 8 to 10 days later to show that you are NOT pregnant. You will also need routine pregnancy tests during treatment. Talk with your doctor.
- If you are able to become pregnant, you must use birth control to prevent pregnancy while taking this drug and for 6 weeks after your last dose. Hormone-based birth control like birth control pills may not work as well to prevent pregnancy. If you use hormone-based birth control, you will also need to use an additional form of birth control. Your doctor will talk with you about the kinds of birth control you are using. If you get pregnant or think you may be pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.
- This drug may raise the chance of getting cancer like lymphoma or skin cancer. Call your doctor right away if you have a change in color or size of a mole, a skin lump or growth, a big weight loss, night sweats, or swollen glands.
- You may have more of a chance of getting an infection. Some infections have been severe or deadly. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.
- Call your doctor right away if you have any signs of infection like fever, chills, flu-like signs, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or a wound that will not heal.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to keep the body from harming the organ after an organ transplant.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have Lesch-Nyhan or Kelley-Seegmiller syndrome or a rare inherited deficiency of hypoxanthine-guanine phosphoribosyl-transferase (HGPRT).
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Azathioprine, cholestyramine, colesevelam, colestipol, norfloxacin with metronidazole, or sevelamer.
- If you are taking another drug that has the same drug in it.
- If you are able to get pregnant and are not using 2 kinds of birth control.
- If you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this drug affects you.
- Have your blood work and other lab tests checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your blood sugar closely.

- Talk with your doctor before getting any vaccines. Use of some vaccines with this drug may either raise the chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- You may bleed more easily. Be careful and avoid injury. Use a soft toothbrush and an electric razor.
- The chance of skin cancer may be raised. Avoid lots of sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and wear clothing and eyewear that protects you from the sun.
- Hepatitis B or C testing may be done. A hepatitis B or C infection may get worse while taking this drug.
- Bleeding, holes, and ulcers in the GI (gastrointestinal) tract have happened with this drug. Sometimes, people have had to go to the hospital. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause diarrhea. If you get diarrhea, talk with your doctor about ways to lower this effect. Do not stop taking this drug without talking with your doctor.
- If you have phenylketonuria (PKU), talk with your doctor. Some products have phenylalanine.
- You may need to avoid donating blood while taking this drug and for some time after. Talk with your doctor.
- You may need to avoid donating sperm while taking this drug and for some time after. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.
- Allergic reactions have happened with mycophenolate products. Most of the time, this happened within hours to the day after treatment was started. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- If your sex partner may become pregnant, use birth control while taking this drug and for at least 90 days after your last dose. If your partner gets pregnant, call the doctor right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- Signs of electrolyte problems like mood changes; confusion; muscle pain, cramps, or spasms; weakness; shakiness; change in balance; an abnormal heartbeat; seizures; loss of appetite; or severe upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of high or low blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Signs of kidney problems like unable to pass urine, change in how much urine is passed, blood in the urine, or a big weight gain.
- Signs of skin infection like oozing, heat, swelling, redness, or pain.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- Fast, slow, or abnormal heartbeat.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds.
- Black, tarry, or bloody stools.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.

- Muscle cramps.
- Swelling.
- Pale skin.
- White patches in mouth.
- Vaginal itching or discharge.
- Yellow skin or eyes.
- A health problem called acute inflammatory syndrome (AIS) has happened with this drug. Sometimes, people have had to go to the hospital. Most of the time, signs happened within weeks to months after starting this drug or after a dose increase. Call your doctor right away if you have fever, joint pain or stiffness, or muscle pain.
- A severe brain problem called progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) has happened with this drug. It may cause disability or can be deadly. Tell your doctor right away if you have signs like confusion, memory problems, depression, change in the way you act, change in strength on 1 side is greater than the other, trouble speaking or thinking, change in balance, or change in eyesight.
- Some people treated with this drug have had very bad kidney problems caused by a certain viral infection (BK virus). In people who have had a kidney transplant, BK virus infection may cause loss of the kidney. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of kidney problems like change in the amount of urine passed, difficulty or pain when passing urine, or blood in the urine.
- Some people have had lung problems with this drug. Sometimes, this has been deadly. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of lung problems like shortness of breath or other trouble breathing, cough that is new or worse, or fever.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

All products:

- Back pain.
- Constipation, diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Headache.
- Gas.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Shakiness.
- Trouble sleeping.

Injection:

- Irritation where the shot is given.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All oral products:

- Take on an empty stomach at least 1 hour before or 2 hours after meals unless your doctor has told you otherwise.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.
- Take this drug at the same time of day.
- If you are taking an antacid that has aluminum or magnesium in it, take it at least 2 hours after taking this drug.

All tablet products:

- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.
- If you have trouble swallowing, talk with your doctor.

Capsules:

- Swallow whole. Do not chew, open, or crush.
- If you have trouble swallowing, talk with your doctor.
- If the capsule is opened or broken, do not touch the contents. If the contents are touched or they get in the eyes, wash hands or eyes right away.

All suspension products:

- Shake well before use.
- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug.
- Do not mix with any other liquid drugs.
- Wear gloves when preparing and giving a dose.
- If you get this drug on the skin, wash it off right away with soap and water.
- If this drug gets in the eyes, rinse with cool water.
- If this drug is spilled, wipe it up using wet paper towels. Wipe the outside of the bottle after you have put the cap back on.

- This drug may be given through certain sizes of feeding tubes. Some sizes of feeding tubes must not be used to give this drug. Use as you have been told. Flush the feeding tube after this drug is given. If you are not sure if you can use with a feeding tube, talk with the doctor.

Injection:

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

Delayed-release tablets:

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

All other oral products:

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is less than 2 hours until your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

Injection:

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

Powder for suspension:

- Store at room temperature or in a refrigerator after the suspension is mixed. Do not freeze.
- Throw away any unused part 60 days after this drug was mixed. Talk with your pharmacist if you are not sure when this is.

Liquid (suspension):

- Store at room temperature. Do not freeze.
- Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.

All other oral products:

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.

Injection:

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

All products:

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.

- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2026-08-28

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Mycophenolate - Last updated on December 12, 2022

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