Is mycophenolate ok to have during pregnancy and breastfeeding?

If you are planning to become pregnant while you are taking mycophenolate, you should discuss this with your doctor. Mycophenolate is **not safe** to take whilst pregnant or breastfeeding. Women must use two methods of effective contraception during treatment and for 6 weeks after stopping. Men are advised to discuss with their consultant the latest advice around mycophenolate and fathering children.

Possible risks

You should tell your doctor or nurse specialist straight away if you develop any of the following after starting mycophenolate:

- A sore throat, fever or any other signs of infection.
- Unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Yellowing of the skin or eyes (this is known as jaundice).
- Any new symptoms that concern you.

It is important to have regular blood tests as mentioned in this leaflet. If you don't have regular blood tests it is not safe for your doctor to prescribe mycophenolate for you.

Tips to reduce your risk of infection

- Try to avoid close contact with people you know have an infection.
- Wash your hands regularly and carry round a small bottle of antibacterial gel to use.
- Keep your mouth clean by brushing your teeth regularly.
- Make sure your food is stored and prepared properly.
- Try to keep your house clean and hygienic, especially the kitchen, bathrooms and toilets.
- Have your yearly 'flu vaccine.

Further reading

Our leaflet '**Mycophenolate products—Important safety information**' is available on our East & North Herts NHS Trust website:
https://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk/content/uploads/2019/10/Mycophenolate-Products-Important-safety-information-V2-05.2020-web.pdf

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Patient Information

Mycophenolate Therapy

Renal Department

Why have I been prescribed this medication?

Mycophenolate is a drug that can be used to treat a variety of medical conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and vasculitis. It is also used as an anti-rejection medicine after organ transplantation to stop the body rejecting the transplant. The clinician that prescribes this medicine for you will tell you about your condition and why mycophenolate is being prescribed.

How does it work?

Mycophenolate belongs to a group of medicines known as immunosuppressants. It helps to reduce or supress your body's own immune system (your immune system helps to protect you against infections). However, sometimes it can overreact or react abnormally and cause illness. Mycophenolate can be used to treat these conditions, often in combination with other medicines.

How long does it take to work?

Mycophenolate works slowly and take several weeks to take effect.

What dose do I take?

The dose of mycophenolate depends on your weight and the medical condition being treated. Typical doses vary between 250mg to 1g, twice a day.

How do I take it?

Mycophenolate mofetil is available as 250mg capsules and 500mg tablets. Mycophenolate is also available as mycophenolate sodium 180mg and 360mg tablets.

- You should always take the medicines as directed by your doctor.
- You should take the mycophenolate with or immediately after food to help reduce stomach upsets.

How long will I be taking it?

The length of time you will be taking mycophenolate will depend on the condition being treated. Do not stop taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to.

Do I need any special checks while on mycophenolate?

Mycophenolate can affect your immune system and other blood cells. Although these effects are rare, it is important that you have regular blood tests to check for early signs of changes in the blood. Your

doctor will tell you how often the blood tests need to be carried out, but this is usually every 2-4 weeks for the first 3-4 months, and then every 12 weeks thereafter.

Does mycophenolate interfere with my other medicines?

Mycophenolate can interact with other medicines. You should tell your doctor which medicines you are taking before starting mycophenolate.

- Other medicines which interact with mycophenolate include aciclovir and trimethoprim. Please let your doctor know if you take any of these medicines.
- Always check with your doctor or pharmacist first before starting any new medication.
- You should avoid 'live' vaccines but most travel vaccines and the 'flu jab are ok.
- It is safe to drink alcohol in moderation while taking mycophenolate but it may make nausea worse.

Can mycophenolate cause side effects?

All medicines can cause unwanted side effects which usually improve as your body gets used to the new medication. During the early weeks you may notice:

- Generally not feeling quite yourself, including some dizziness and aches and pains.
- Stomach upsets, such as feeling sick or loose stools or diarrhoea, this is quite common to start with.
- Bruising.
- Hair loss.
- You are more likely to catch infection.

In the long-term there is a higher risk of tumours, including skin cancers and a condition called lymphoproliferative disorders. We recommend that you use a high factor sun cream to prevent skin damage and regular surveillance, such as cervical screening (smear tests) for women.

What happens if I forget to take a dose?

If you remember within 12 hours of your dose being due then take your dose as usual. If it is more than 12 hours since your dose was due, do not take the dose and take your next dose at the normal time.