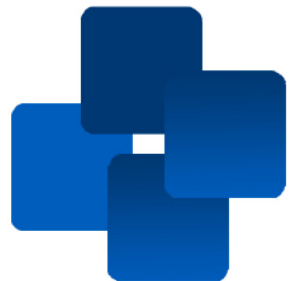


Patient Information

Tacrolimus Therapy

Renal Department



Why have I been prescribed this medication?

Tacrolimus is a drug that can be used to treat kidney conditions. 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 tacrolimus is being prescribed.

How does it work?

Tacrolimus belongs to a group of medicines known as immunosuppressants. It helps to reduce or suppress your body's own immune system to limit or prevent tissue damage rather than having an immediate effect on symptoms.

Your immune system helps to protect you against infections. However, sometimes it can overreact or react abnormally and cause illness. Tacrolimus can be used to treat these conditions, often in combination with other medicines. Your doctor may prescribe tacrolimus if you are on steroid treatment in order to try and reduce your steroid dose.

How long does it take to work?

Tacrolimus works slowly and may take up to 12 weeks to take effect. Unless you have severe side effects it is important to continue taking it even if you do not notice any change in your symptoms. It is likely you will be taking this medication long-term.

What dose do I take?

The dose of tacrolimus depends on your weight and the medical condition being treated. Your dose will also depend on blood tests.

How do I take it?

Tacrolimus is available as a capsule and in different brands. It is important that you stay on the same brand. Depending on the brand, tacrolimus is either taken **once** a day or **twice** a day with a full glass of water. The dose should be taken on an empty stomach, preferably at least 1 hour **before** or 2-3 hours **after** having food. You should take the medicines as directed by your doctor.

Does tacrolimus interfere with my other medicines?

Tacrolimus can interact with other medicines. You should tell your doctor which medicines you are taking before starting tacrolimus. Other medicines which can cause problems with tacrolimus include:

- Some antifungal and antibiotic medications, e.g. fluconazole and clarithromycin
- Anti-epileptic medication, e.g. phenytoin and carbamazepine
- Some blood pressure medications, e.g. diltiazem and verapamil
- You should **not** take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), e.g. ibuprofen or naproxen unless advised by your kidney doctors
- St John's wort and some other herbal preparations should be avoided
- Avoid drinking grapefruit juice
- 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' and covid jabs are ok

It is safe to drink alcohol in moderation while taking tacrolimus but you are recommended to have alcohol free days without saving units up to drink all in one go.

Can tacrolimus cause side effects?

All medicines can cause unwanted side effects. Side effects that can occur with tacrolimus include:

- Stomach upsets, such as feeling sick or diarrhoea
- Headache, tremor or high blood pressure
- High blood sugar levels or unmask diabetes
- Tacrolimus can affect your kidneys and liver, so you will need to have regular blood tests to monitor the levels
- Hair loss, rash
- You are more likely to catch infections so avoid close contact with people with severe active infections

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 ONCE daily dose or within 6 hours of your TWICE daily dose being due then take your dose as usual. If you remember after these times, do not take the dose and take your next dose at the normal time.

Is it ok to have tacrolimus during pregnancy and breastfeeding?

If you are planning to become pregnant while you are taking tacrolimus, you should discuss this with your doctor. Tacrolimus is thought to be safe whilst pregnant or breastfeeding but blood tests will need to be checked more regularly.

Do I need any special checks while on tacrolimus?

Tacrolimus 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. On blood test days, remember to take your morning tacrolimus dose **after the blood test is taken**.

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

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