

Mycophenolate (Cellcept®)

What is it?

- Mycophenolate can be used to treat different types of kidney disease.
- Mycophenolate was originally made to prevent organ rejection in people with kidney, heart or liver transplants.

Why did my doctor prescribe or recommend it?

- Healthy kidneys have many little filters that filter out extra water, salts and waste products from your blood. Your kidney disease is caused by your immune system attacking these filters and causing them to scar up and stop working.

How does it work?

- Mycophenolate works by weakening your immune system and reducing the damage caused to your kidneys. The goal is to make your kidney disease less active to prevent long lasting damage to your kidneys.

How long will I be on it?

- The duration of treatment can range from 6-12 months. This may be different in your case depending on your disease and how you respond to treatment. Ask your kidney doctor how long you will be on mycophenolate.

Are there any safety concerns?

- A common side effect of this medication is diarrhea. This effect may improve with time. If diarrhea lasts more than 2 days or if you have signs of dehydration such as dry lips, thirst and decreased urine, phone the Renal Health Clinic.
- This medication weakens your immune system and can put you at risk for infections. If you develop signs and symptoms of an infection such as a fever, chills or sore throat, you should notify your doctor or nurse as soon as possible.

- Mycophenolate may decrease your white blood cells (cells that fight infections), red blood cells, or platelets. It is very important to do all the blood tests ordered.
- Mycophenolate may increase your risk for cancers such as lymphoma and skin cancer.

While taking mycophenolate:

AVOID BREAKING TABLETS OR OPENING CAPSULES – medication dust may come in contact with things in your house and expose other people to possible harmful effects of your medication.

O.K. TO TAKE WITH FOOD – the pharmacy may put a sticker on the mycophenolate stating to take on an empty stomach. However, it is O.K. to take this medication with food as it will allow for easier scheduling of your medications and may decrease stomach upset with this pill.

Take mycophenolate at least 1 hour before your calcium pills (ApoCal®) or antacids (example: Tums®, Amphogel®, Gaviscon®). Calcium and antacids prevent mycophenolate from getting absorbed from your stomach into your body.

SEXUALLY ACTIVE MEN SHOULD USE CONDOMS- mycophenolate can have harmful effects on the developing baby. Sexually active men should use a condom while on this medication and for 90 days after stopping the medication. Also female partners of males on mycophenolate should use another type of birth control.

SEXUALLY ACTIVE WOMEN SHOULD USE TWO FORMS OF BIRTH CONTROL – mycophenolate can be harmful for the developing baby, so women must prevent pregnancy during treatment and for 6 weeks after stopping mycophenolate. The doctor may require you to take pregnancy tests before starting this medication and at follow-up visits. If you discover you are pregnant, contact your doctor right away.

AVOID POSSIBLE SOURCES OF INFECTIONS – being around people who are sick with flu, pneumonia, cold or other infections can put you at risk of getting sick yourself. Clean your hands often using soap and water or a hand sanitizer to prevent the spread of germs.

PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING – mycophenolate can be harmful to a baby and should not be taken while pregnant or breastfeeding. Contact your doctor right away if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or breastfeeding.

BLOOD OR SPERM DONATION- do not donate blood while on mycophenolate and for at least 6 weeks after stopping this medication. Men should not donate sperm during while on mycophenolate and at least 90 days after stopping this medication.