

## Cyclosporine

### What is it?

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

### Why did my doctor prescribe or recommend it?

- Healthy kidneys contain many little filters that are responsible for filtering out excess 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?

- Cyclosporine works by decreasing your immune system's response (weakening your immune system). The goal is to make the kidney disease less active before the inflammation leads to permanent kidney damage.

### What doses are recommended?

The dose is based on your medical condition, weight, response to therapy and the drug levels in your blood.

### Are there side effects?

- This medication can lower the body's ability to fight an infection. Notify your doctor promptly if you develop any signs of an infection such as fever, chills or persistent sore throat. The doctor may put you on antibiotic to lower the chance of getting sick with an infection.
- Cyclosporine may cause your gums to become enlarged above your teeth. They may also become red or bleed. This is usually mild to moderate. Be sure to brush and floss your teeth, see your dentist regularly and tell the dentist you are taking cyclosporine.
- You may get a hand tremor while on this medication. It usually improves or goes away with time.
- Some people, particularly women, may notice an increase in hair growth on the face, arms and upper body.
- This medication may cause headaches. If you have headaches that are bothersome or occur more than usual, be sure to tell the Renal Health Clinic.

- Cyclosporine can cause high blood pressure, high potassium and high cholesterol. Your doctor will do blood tests and may ask you to change your diet or prescribe medication for this.
- Cyclosporine may slightly increase your risk for certain types of cancer, such as skin cancer. Be sure to protect yourself from the sun.

### **While taking cyclosporine:**

***Flu and pneumonia (Pneumovax) vaccines*** – Cyclosporine can weaken the immune system. It is recommended to have the flu shot every year in the fall and a pneumonia vaccine given anytime of the year.

***Lab Tests*** – We can monitor the level of cyclosporine in your blood. For this blood test, do not take your morning dose of cyclosporine and go to the lab in the morning. After the blood test is done take your morning dose of cyclosporine.

***Drug Interactions***– Cyclosporine has many drug interactions. Check with your pharmacist or doctor before taking any new medications, including prescription, over-the-counter and herbal products.

***Avoid Grapefruit, Grapefruit Juice and Pomegranate Juice*** – These juices can greatly increase cyclosporine blood levels.

### **What else can I do?**

***WHEN TO TAKE*** – Cyclosporine may be taken with food or on an empty stomach, but you should try to be consistent (always with food or always on an empty stomach). It should be taken every 12 hours. If you develop upset stomach, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea then try taking with food.

***IF YOU MISS A DOSE*** – Take it as soon as you remember if it's within 6 hours of when you should have taken it. If you remember after 6 hours, skip the dose completely and continue with your regular schedule. Never double the dose or take an extra dose.

***STORING YOUR MEDICATION*** – Keep cyclosporine away from extreme temperatures (very hot or very cold). Store at room temperature. If you use the capsules, keep them in the foil wrapper until you are ready to take them.

***PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING*** – Women are usually recommended to avoid pregnancy while on cyclosporine for treatment of kidney disease, however, cyclosporine has been used

during pregnancy for women with a kidney transplant. Cyclosporine use is probably safe during breastfeeding but the baby should be closely monitored which may include checking a cyclosporine blood level in their blood. Inform the Renal Health Clinic if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or breastfeeding to discuss the risks and benefits.

**CLEAN YOUR HANDS FREQUENTLY** – Cyclosporine can increase your risk of infections even if your white blood cell counts are normal. Washing your hands with soap and water or using a hand sanitizer before you eat and at other times throughout the day will help prevent infections.

**TRY TO AVOID OTHER PEOPLE WITH INFECTIONS IF POSSIBLE** – If someone you know is sick with a cold, flu, pneumonia, or other infection try to avoid visiting them until they are better. If someone in your house is sick then clean your hands frequently and, if possible, have another person care for them.