

PATIENT INFORMATION

Mycophenolate (MMF)

What is mycophenolate?

Mycophenolate mofetil (MMF) is used to control autoimmune conditions including immune thrombocytopenia (ITP) by reducing the activity of the body's defence system (immune system).

What are the risks and side effects of MMF?

- Mycophenolate has been used in tens of thousands of people with ITP as second line treatment and is generally an effective, well tolerated and acceptably safe medication. However, some patients experience side effects. The most common side-effects of MMF are nausea (feeling sick), diarrhoea, vomiting or stomach pain.
- Mycophenolate can also affect your blood count (one of the effects is that fewer blood cells are made) and can make you more likely to develop infections.
- Although this is uncommon, there's a slightly increased risk of certain types of cancer in people using MMF for long term use. Please discuss this matter with your doctor if you're worried.
- If you are taking MMF and you are female you must not become pregnant or breast feed as it can harm the baby.

MMF and contraception

- If you are taking MMF you must not become pregnant or breast feed as it can harm the baby. If you are a woman who could become pregnant and you are having sex, you must use TWO reliable forms of contraception at the same time before starting MMF, during therapy and for six weeks after stopping MMF.
- Example of reliable contraception include oral contraceptive pills, the implant or coil, and barrier methods such as condoms.
- Talk to your doctor about the most suitable contraception for you.
- If you are male, with a partner of child bearing potential, you must agree to use condoms for the duration of MMF and 3 months after stopping, even if you have had a vasectomy. This is because MMF can affect sperm. In addition, female partners of male patients treated with MMF are recommended to use highly effective contraception during treatment and for a total of 3 months after the last dose of MMF.
- Your doctor team must be informed immediately if you or your partner become pregnant. Women who become pregnant must stop the MMF straight away. The pregnancy will be monitored until its conclusion for safety reasons and the research team may require access to mother's and/or child's notes, and any possible follow up of the child including post-natal examinations. You will be asked to consent for this eventuality.

What else do I need to know whilst taking MMF?

- Because MMF can affect your blood count, and rarely cause liver or kidney problems, your doctor will arrange for you to have a blood test before you start treatment and regular blood checks while on MMF.
- You should tell your doctor or nurse specialist straight away if you develop any of the following after starting mycophenolate:
 - a. a sore throat
 - b. a fever
 - c. any other symptoms of infection
 - d. any other new symptoms or
 - e. anything else that concerns you.
- You should also seek medical attention if you develop side effects such as unexplained bruising, bleeding, shortness of breath, excessive tiredness, yellowing of the skin or the whites of your eyes, or severe itching.
- If any of the symptoms listed above are severe, you should stop taking MMF and see your doctor immediately. Generally, however, it's best to talk to your doctor before stopping or reducing MMF.
- You should also see your doctor if you develop chickenpox or shingles or come into contact with someone who has chickenpox or shingles. These infections can be severe if you're taking MMF. You may need antiviral treatment, and MMF may be stopped until you're better.
- Due to the small increase in risk of skin cancer, you should avoid exposure to strong sunlight and protect your skin with sunblock or sunscreen.
- If you are taking MMF, it is important not to drink more alcohol than the government recommended safe limits – no more than 14 units per week. It's strongly recommended to have alcohol free days, without 'saving up' units to drink in one go.
- If you're taking MMF it is recommended that you avoid live vaccines such as yellow fever or shingles. The vaccine against the most common cause of pneumonia and yearly flu vaccines are safe to have as they are not live vaccines. It is important to have these vaccinations to reduce your chances of getting these infections.
- Do not take over the counter medicines or herbal remedies without discussing first with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.
- For advice on avoiding infection from food, visit: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/food-poisoning/pages/prevention.aspx>
- There is a very small possibility of previously unknown side effects from MMF. We will take every precaution possible to monitor you for all side effects and will encourage you to report anything of concern to the research team on 01803 654597

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.