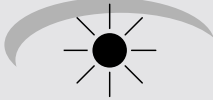
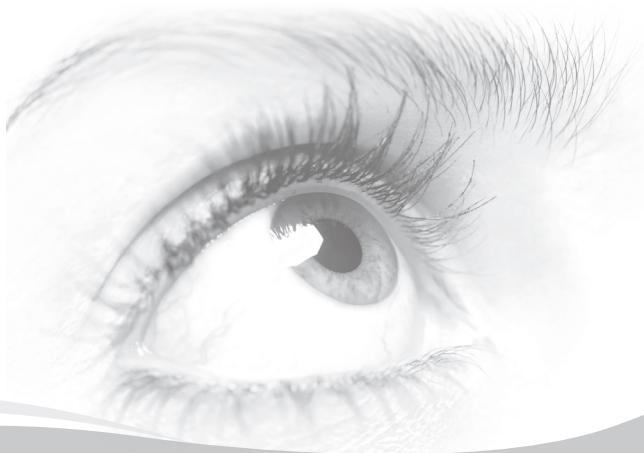


Scottish Uveitis Network



Information about ...
Tacrolimus



Ophthalmology Service

Scottish Uveitis National Managed Clinical Network

What is tacrolimus?

Tacrolimus is a drug used in the treatment of inflammatory conditions and to prevent rejection of organs including heart, kidney and liver, following transplantation. It reduces inflammation in these conditions. Clinical studies have shown that tacrolimus can also control inflammation within the eye.

TACROLIMUS SHOULD BE PRESCRIBED BY BRAND NAME AND NOT GENERICALLY

When should you be careful taking tacrolimus?

Be sure to tell your doctor if:

- If you have liver or kidney disease.
- You have heart disease or any history of disease of the nervous system.
- You have episodes of infection.
- If you have not had chicken pox or shingles but come in contact with someone who has, or if you develop chicken pox or shingles, you should stop tacrolimus and see your doctor immediately, as you may need special treatment.
- If you have recently had or are about to have vaccinations.
- If you are on anti-coagulants such as warfarin
- If you have diabetes.
- You are on any other medication, especially painkillers.

When should tacrolimus not be used?

(Or only after discussion with your Consultant)

- If you are or think you may be pregnant.
- If you are breast feeding.

Can I have vaccinations while I am on tacrolimus?

- You should not take live vaccines while on tacrolimus.
- Pneumovax and an annual flu vaccine are recommended while on this treatment.
- Please arrange to see your general practitioner each year to discuss this.

How should tacrolimus be taken?

- Always take the tablets as your Doctor directs.
- Swallow tablets whole, do not suck or chew them.
- Moderately fatty foods slow down the absorption of Tacrolimus into your body. Therefore it is better to take it on an empty stomach or at least 1 hour before or 2-3 hours after a meal.
- Do not drink grapefruit juice while taking tacrolimus.
- Your Specialist will tell you what dose to take which may change continually. You will be taking between 2-6 mg per day. This depends on your body weight and your response to therapy.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you realize. However, if you do not realize until the next day, skip the missed dose and carry on as before. Do not take double the dose.

- If you take too many tablets or someone else accidentally takes your medicine, contact your doctor, pharmacist or the nearest hospital straight away.

Will I need blood tests?

- You will require blood tests weekly for a month, then fortnightly for the next 2 months, then 1-2 monthly thereafter.

What are the possible side effects?

- Normally this treatment is tolerated well. You may however have some unwanted reactions.
- Initially you may feel nausea after tablets, which is often relieved by taking them after food.
- General tiredness can occur at first but wears off after continued use.
- You may observe a tremor of your hands that can persist.
- Occasionally, people experience headache or muscle pain.
- Tacrolimus may cause kidney damage and therefore your blood count and kidney function is monitored regularly to identify problems early. The drug dose is then reduced or stopped. Levels return to normal when this is done.
- Less commonly, agitation and anxiety or impaired liver function and jaundice may occur.
- There may be an increased risk of infection with this treatment. It is important to inform your doctor if you feel unwell.

- There is may be an increased risk of skin cancer with tacrolimus. Therefore you should limit your exposure to sunlight by wearing appropriate protective clothing and using a sunscreen with a high protection factor.
- Lymphoma (cancer of the lymphoid tissues) has been reported but is very rare.
- In cases of serious side effects the treatment is stopped completely.
- If you experience any side effects, please contact your GP or ophthalmologist for advice.

Can tacrolimus be used when pregnant or breast feeding?

- You should not take tacrolimus if you are or think you may be pregnant, as it could harm an unborn baby.
- Reliable contraception should be used by men and women taking tacrolimus.
- Tacrolimus should be stopped at least 6 weeks before trying for a baby.
- Tacrolimus should not be taken when breast feeding.
- Please let us know if you wish to plan a family so that we can discuss treatment options with you.

How long will tacrolimus take to work?

- Tacrolimus does not work immediately. It may take up to 3 months before you notice any benefit.

Driving and using machines

- Tacrolimus may cause visual or nervous disturbances. If you are affected, do not drive or operate machinery.

May I drink alcohol while taking tacrolimus?

- Alcohol may increase the risk of visual and nervous disturbances that may occur with this drug.

Further information

The Scottish Uveitis National Managed Clinical Network is a nationally supported network to improve and ensure an equality of care for patients with uveitis throughout Scotland.

www.sun.scot.nhs.uk

The Uveitis Information Group (Scotland) is a patient-led charity, based in Scotland, run by volunteers. They provide information, leaflets and fact sheets on uveitis which can be accessed via their site.

Uveitis Information Group

South House, Sweening,
Vidlein, Shetland Isles, ZE2 9QE
Email: info@uveitis.net
Website: **www.uveitis.net**

This leaflet has been produced by the Scottish Uveitis National Managed Clinical Network.

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Available on-line at: **www.sun.scot.nhs.uk**

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