



# Cyclophosphamide

This leaflet aims to answer frequently asked questions that patients taking the medication Cyclophosphamide may have. This is a form of chemotherapy which works by stopping or slowing cell growth. It acts by suppressing the immune system in order to control and reduce the level of inflammation in your disease. In order for it to work well, this medicine should be taken regularly.

## How do I take Cyclophosphamide?

Cyclophosphamide treatment will be tailored according to the severity of your inflammation and individual factors such as your age, weight and kidney function.

It is usually given daily and should be taken with a full glass of water. It may take up to two to eight weeks for your condition to improve, and up to four months for the mucous membrane pemphigoid to disappear. Therefore, do not be discouraged if results are not immediate.

Very rarely, cyclophosphamide needs to be delivered via an intravenous drip (IV) to help control the disease. When taking any form of Cyclophosphamide, it is very important that you drink plenty of water and pass

urine frequently to help avoid kidney and bladder problems.


## Can I carry on taking my other medications?

Due to the potential risk of the drug interacting with other medicines, you should inform your doctor and pharmacist about any medication you are currently taking or any new medicines you have been prescribed. This includes any medications bought from the pharmacy without a prescription as well as herbal and complementary medicines (e.g. St. John's Wort).

To ensure you remember everything, bring a list of current medications with you when you see your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Take it with you to any other general hospital appointments you may have.

There are certain drug interactions that you should be aware of:

- Cyclophosphamide can affect the effectiveness of some medications including heart medication such as digoxin.
- It increases the side effects of antifungal therapy like Fluconazole and Itraconazole.

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- Cyclophosphamide increases the effect of Suxamethonium, a drug used in anaesthesia, so be sure to tell your anaesthetist that you are on Cyclophosphamide before having any operations or procedures.

## What else do I need to be aware of before taking Cyclophosphamide?

### Previous medical issues

Before starting Cyclophosphamide, you must inform your doctor if you have or have had any heart, lung or urinary tract problems, or suffer from anaemia or any other blood disorders.

### Conception and contraception

- Cyclophosphamide can affect fertility in both men (lack of sperm) and women (loss of periods).
- Contraception is advised for both men and women during therapy and for at least three months after completion of the course of Cyclophosphamide.
- Men and women should ideally wait six to 12 months (until the disease is stable) before trying for a baby.
- Male patients wishing to father children should be referred to the Regional Fertility Centre by their GP.
- Female patients should consider fertility preservation and egg storage and should be referred to their Regional Fertility Centre by their GP.

### Breastfeeding and pregnancy:

- Cyclophosphamide is harmful to the foetus and new-born babies, and therefore should not be used during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

### Viral infections and vaccinations

Your body's resistance to infection can be reduced while you are taking Cyclophosphamide. Therefore you should avoid close contact with people who have viral infections, in particular chickenpox or shingles. If you develop either of these, you should inform your doctor immediately. You should also inform your doctor or pharmacist before having any vaccinations (e.g. the flu vaccine).

You may also be more at risk of catching infections of the skin, mouth, stomach and intestines, lungs and urinary tract. Please inform your doctor about any symptoms of infection which last for more than three days (for example, sore throat, cough, fever). Be thorough with your hand washing to reduce the chance of infection.

### Food preparation

Cooked, chilled foods should be reheated thoroughly. Salads should be washed well and ready-prepared supermarket salads should be avoided. Do not eat soft cheese made from unpasteurised milk.

### Alcohol

Men and women are generally advised not to drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week, spread evenly over three or more days. 14 units is equivalent to six pints of average-strength beer or ten small glasses of low-strength wine.





## Which tests will I need and how often will I need them?

It is very important that you are regularly monitored whilst taking Cyclophosphamide. Therefore, before starting treatment an initial blood test and urine test will be carried out. These are then repeated every week for the first month, then every two weeks in month two and three, then every four weeks in months four, five and six. This may vary depending on your condition. It will be your responsibility to ensure that you attend regularly for your blood tests. It is important that you do not miss these and that you do not take cyclophosphamide unless you are having blood tests regularly.

## What are the side effects?

As with most medicines, Cyclophosphamide may cause side-effects, although this is not the case for everyone.

### Possible side-effects include:

- hair loss
- symptoms such as bleeding, bruising and rash (due to possible bone marrow suppression)
- blood in the urine
- nausea and vomiting

**If you develop any of these symptoms please tell your doctor straightaway.**

## If you are diagnosed with any of the following medical conditions you must stop taking Cyclophosphamide and seek medical advice immediately:

- anorexia
- cardio toxicity at higher doses
- disturbances of carbohydrate metabolism
- pulmonary fibrosis
- pancreatitis
- increased pigmentation (nails, palms, soles)
- uro-epithelial toxicity
- gout or hyperuricaemia (too much uric acid in your blood stream)
- male infertility
- premature menopause
- secondary malignancy
- thromboembolism
- rare risk of bladder cancer

## Need more information?

Please refer to the leaflet included with the medicine pack for further information, or contact the pharmacy department on: 020 7566 2362

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### **Moorfields Direct telephone helpline**

Phone: 020 7566 2345

Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm

Saturday, 9am-5pm

Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

### **Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)**

Phone: 020 7566 2324/ 020 7566 2325

Email: [moorfields.pals@nhs.net](mailto:moorfields.pals@nhs.net)

Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

### **Your right to treatment within 18 weeks**

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further (see above). For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit [www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs](http://www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs)

