



PATIENT FACT SHEET

Cyclosporine (Neoral, Sandimmune, Gengraf)



WHAT IS IT?

Cyclosporine (Neoral, Sandimmune, Gengraf) is a potent immunosuppressant drug used in treatment for rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and other autoimmune diseases. Cyclosporine is considered a disease modifying anti-rheumatic drug (DMARD) because it not only decreases the pain and swelling of arthritis, but it may also prevent joint damage and reduce the risk of long term disability. Cyclosporine is also known to slow the progression of arthritis over time. Cyclosporine,

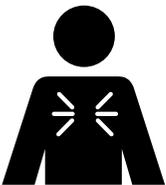
originally used to prevent the rejection of transplanted kidneys, continues to be recommended for a variety of organ transplants. However, it has proven effective as a treatment for rheumatoid arthritis patients who have not responded well to other medications. It has also been used to treat those with other rheumatic conditions, inflammatory eye diseases, severe forms of psoriasis and other autoimmune skin disorders.



HOW TO TAKE IT

Cyclosporine is taken by mouth twice a day. The starting dose is 2.5mg/kg of body weight per day, which may be increased over time. Cyclosporine comes in 25mg and 100mg capsules, to be taken twice a day. The daily dose usually works out to 75mg or 100mg taken twice daily. Your physician may increase the dose

to 4.5mg/kg a day or higher in some situations. The capsules should not be crushed or chewed. Because cyclosporine can affect the immune system, it should be handled by caregivers with gloves. Cyclosporine can take several months to work and needs frequent blood test monitoring.



SIDE EFFECTS

The most common and potentially serious side effects are high blood pressure and kidney problems, so make sure to drink plenty of water and stay well hydrated. Both problems are more likely to occur in elderly people who take this medication. Cyclosporine may also increase the risk of some kinds of infections; notify your doctor if you

notice signs of an infection, such as fevers. Other possible side effects include headaches, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain or indigestion, swelling of the hands or feet, tremors, increased hair growth, gum swelling, muscle cramps, or numbness and tingling of the hands or feet.



TELL YOUR DOCTOR

Cyclosporine interacts with many medicines; consult with your doctor about medication interactions. Be sure to tell your doctor about all of the medications you are taking, including over-the-counter drugs and natural remedies. Let your doctor know if you have high blood pressure, kidney problems, or cancer, as Cyclosporine can complicate these conditions. Talk with your doctor before receiving any vaccines or undergoing any surgeries while on cyclosporine. You should discuss updating vaccines

prior to starting cyclosporine. If you are pregnant or are considering having a child, discuss this with your doctor before beginning the medication. Cyclosporine can cause serious birth defects and should not be taken while pregnant, attempting to become pregnant, or while breastfeeding. Contact your doctor if you have signs of an infection such as fever or chills, or if you are taking antibiotics.