

Patient Information Sheet

Cyclosporine for Inflammatory Bowel Disease (brand name = Neoral[®] or Sandimmune[®])

What is cyclosporine?

Cyclosporine is a drug which reduces the body's immune system to react and thus reduces the inflammation that occurs in the lining of the intestine during Ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.

Does cyclosporine work in inflammatory bowel disease?

Clinical trials have shown that cyclosporine may be effective in patients with severe Crohn's disease, severe ulcerative colitis and those patients with severe perianal fissures and/or fistulas. Cyclosporine does not work on all patients and the decision to use cyclosporine must be made by your physician who will determine this on a case by case basis.

How is cyclosporine given?

Cyclosporine can either be given by intravenous infusion (if you are in hospital) or by mouth. Cyclosporine has a very narrow range of action, that is, if the blood levels are too low it will not work and if the blood levels are too high you may have significant side effects. For that reason, you will need to have frequent blood tests to determine the cyclosporine level in your body.

When do I get the blood test?

The doctor will tell you when you will need your blood test. In general, this is done more frequently when you first start the Cyclosporine and then becomes less frequent as you have been on it longer. It is important that the blood test be done immediately before you take your morning cyclosporine dose.

How long will I be on cyclosporine?

In general most patients are on cyclosporine for only several weeks to several months. The time you are on Cyclosporine will be determined by your physician and whether or not your inflammatory bowel disease is responding to the cyclosporine. Often you will be placed on other medications when Cyclosporine is withdrawn.

What are the side effects of cyclosporine?

Cyclosporine has a large number of side effects. The risk of developing side effects increases if you have too much cyclosporine in your blood. This is why it is important to have your blood tests monitored regularly. Not all side effects occur in all patients and your doctor will follow you carefully when you are on Cyclosporine. Some of the side effects are: high blood pressure, tremor, nausea, burning sensation, and, with long-term use only, swelling of your gums and abnormal hair growth over face and arms.

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It is important to note that other medications can either increase or decrease the blood level of cyclosporine thus you must never take any medication (including over-the-counter medications from the drugstore) without first speaking to your doctor.

