

Patient information

Mycophenolate Mofetil MMF use in Autoimmune Blood Disorders

Haematology Liverpool

What is mycophenolate mofetil (MMF)?

MMF is an oral medication which belongs to the group called “immunosuppressants”. The aim of this medicine is to control inflammation and put the disease into remission. It is more often used than steroids which have long term side effects, though it takes longer to work than steroids.

Mycophenolate reduces hyperactivity in your immune system. As a result, your body will not be as good as normal at fighting infections. This means you may catch more infections than usual. These include infections of the brain, skin, mouth, stomach and gut, lungs and urinary system.

How it is MMF given?

MMF is taken by mouth in the form of capsules (250 mg), tablets (500mg) or an oral suspension. It is taken with or soon after eating food. This should be swallowed whole as it is not safe to breathe the powder inside the capsules.

Do not stop taking this medication unless you have been instructed to do so by your doctor.

MMF will be started at a low dose and then increased depending upon your clinical response and your laboratory results. It can take up to four to six weeks to see a response to MMF.

Please observe the following advice when taking MMF:

- Swallow your capsules or tablets whole with a glass of water.
- Do not break or crush them.
- Do not take any capsules that have broken or split open.
- Take care not to let any powder from inside a broken capsule get into your eyes or mouth. If this happens, rinse with plenty of plain water.
- Take care not to let any powder from inside a broken capsule get onto your skin. If this happens, wash the area thoroughly with soap and water.

What are the possible reactions/side effects?

Like all medicines, MMF also has side effects, although not everybody experiences them. If you notice any side effects, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. Most of these symptoms can be reduced by starting with a low dose of MMF and increasing the dose gradually over time or increasing the number of times the medication is given each day. You will be closely monitored in clinic while you are on immunosuppressants.

- Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea – Anti sickness tablets can be prescribed to manage this.
- Headache – the most common side effect reported but not experienced by every patient.
- Disturbance to your sense of taste.
- Reduced white blood cell count – leading to increased risk of infection. Tell your doctor or nurse straightaway when you have signs of an infection such as fever or a sore throat.
- Hair thinning or loss.
- Effect on liver function.
- Skin cancer – taking MMF long term can increase the risk of developing skin cancer. You should avoid excessive exposure to sunlight by not sunbathing, wearing suitable clothing (e.g. long sleeves and sunhat) and using sunscreens with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30 and a star rating of at least four.
- Lymphoma - taking MMF for a number of years is associated with a very small increased risk of certain types of cancer affecting the lymph nodes. If you detect any new swellings or lumps, or changes in your skin, which last more than two weeks you should inform your doctor immediately.

Do not take mycophenolate Mofetil if you are allergic to mycophenolate mofetil, mycophenolic acid or any of the other ingredients in this medicine.

Tell your doctor immediately if you have swelling of your face, lips, tongue or throat, with difficulty breathing - you might be having a serious allergic reaction to the medicine (called anaphylaxis).

Monitoring

In addition to the monitoring for the condition you are taking MMF to treat, there are additional blood tests and monitoring that you will require.

These include:

Liver function and full blood count blood tests to check for white blood cell count and liver function.

- Taken every week for the first month, then fortnightly for two months, then monthly until six months after starting the medication. Blood tests will be needed every three to six months once stable.

Pregnancy test

- Undertaken before starting treatment for women of childbearing age (usually two tests eight to ten days apart)

Chest X-Ray

- A chest X-Ray is normally taken before commencing the medication.

Pregnancy, Contraception and MMF

- Females must not become pregnant whilst on mycophenolate mofetil as there is a risk of harm to the unborn child.
- A pregnancy test will be performed before starting treatment for women of childbearing age.
- If you are planning to become pregnant or in the event of a pregnancy, you should contact your doctor immediately.
- Females should use two forms of effective contraception prior to commencing treatment, during treatment and for six weeks after stopping treatment.
- Mothers who are taking MMF should not breastfeed.
- Men (including those who have had a vasectomy) taking MMF and their female partners should use effective contraception during treatment and for 90 days (or 13 weeks) after stopping treatment.

Vaccines

If you need to have a vaccine (a live vaccine) while taking Mycophenolate Mofetil, talk to your doctor or pharmacist first. Your doctor will advise you on what vaccines you can have. There are vaccinations which are important to receive (including the influenza and COVID vaccines), however due to the immunosuppressive effect of MMF you may not get as good a level of protection as someone who is not taking MMF.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

For further Information please contact

Haematology Liverpool

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Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 3397

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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