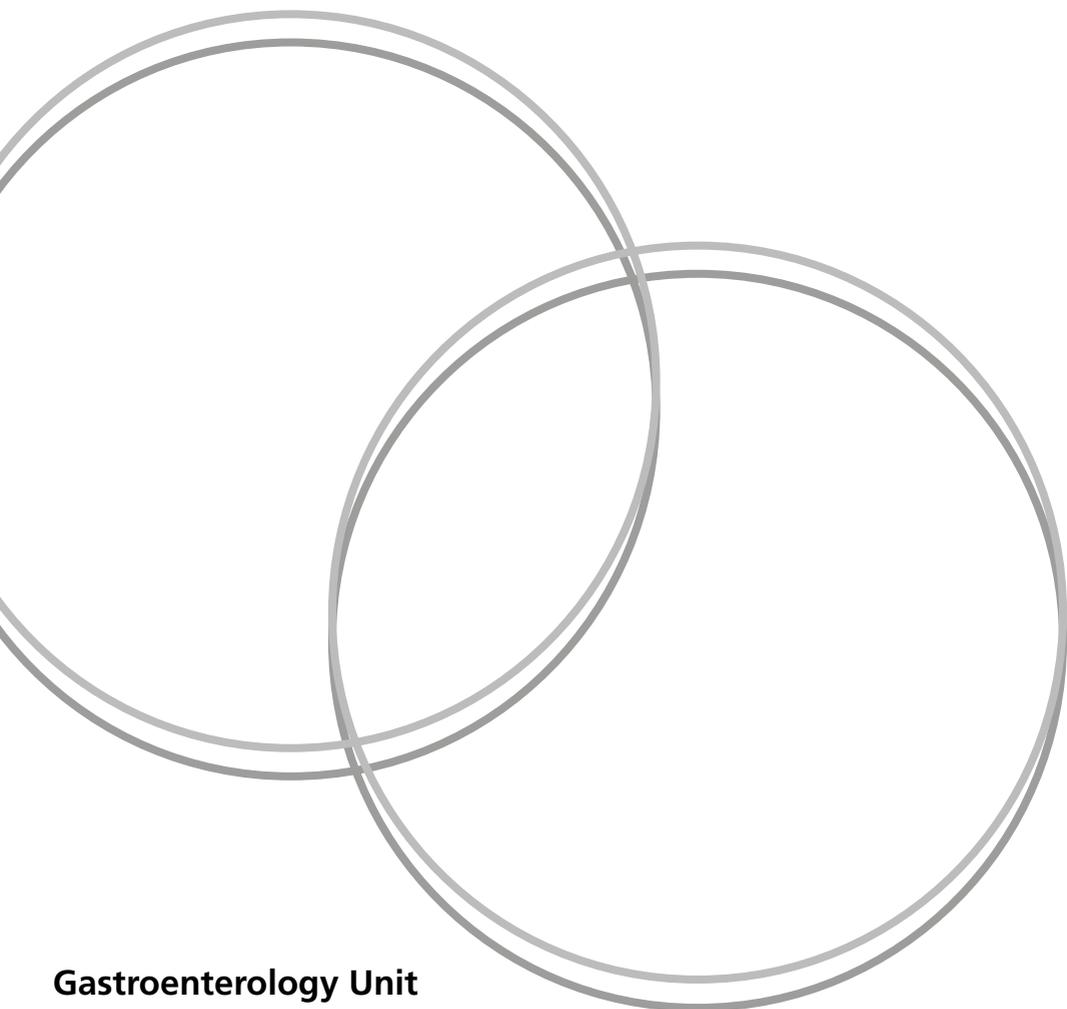




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Ciclosporin

**Medicines information  
for patients**



**Gastroenterology Unit**

## **Ciclosporin**

This leaflet answers some common questions patients ask. Further information can be found in the information leaflet supplied by the manufacturer or from your pharmacist, IBD nurse specialist or doctor.

## **Why have I been started on this medicine?**

Ciclosporin is used for the treatment of acute severe ulcerative colitis which is not responding to corticosteroid treatment. Ciclosporin is not licenced in the UK for this indication but is routinely used.

## **How does it work?**

Ciclosporin suppresses inflammation and dampens down the body's immune system. A good response to treatment (improvement in symptoms) will be seen within a few days. If there is a poor response you will be offered alternative treatment.

## **What dose do I take?**

The dose of ciclosporin is initially based on your weight and rounded up to the nearest capsule size. The dose may be adjusted according to your response to the treatment and the level of drug identified in your blood when tested. Do not change your dose unless told to do so by your doctor.

Usually ciclosporin will be started in hospital and be given intravenously (into a vein) and then changed to capsules before you go home. However, if your cholesterol is low you will be prescribed the capsules straight away.

## **How do I take the oral preparation?**

Ciclosporin comes as a gel-filled capsule and is available in three different strengths – 100mg, 50mg, and 25mg. The capsules have a strong and distinctive smell. A liquid form is available if you have problems swallowing the capsules. There are different brands of ciclosporin e.g. Capimune®, Vanquoral®, Neoral®, Deximune®) and it is important you remain on the same brand supplied to you from the hospital.

Ciclosporin is taken twice a day. Ideally the two doses should be taken 12 hours apart e.g. at 8.00am and 8.00pm. It is very important that when blood is taken to measure drug levels that you take your dose of ciclosporin AFTER blood has been taken. This is so we know we are measuring the lowest amount of drug in your blood (sometimes referred to as a “trough” level). You will be told when you need a blood test to measure the drug level.

Whole grapefruit and/ or grapefruit juice should not be taken for at least one hour before you take the capsules as grapefruit juice can increase ciclosporin levels in the blood.

## **How long will I be taking it?**

Patients who respond to ciclosporin usually remain on it for 3-6 months. You may then be started on alternative medication to keep your colitis in remission in the longer term.

Do not stop taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to, however well you feel.

## **What happens if I forget to take a dose?**

If you forget to take a dose, take your usual dose as soon as you remember, unless it is almost time for your next dose. Do not double the dose. If you take too much ciclosporin tell your GP, Gastroenterologist or IBD nurse specialist as soon as possible.

## **What are the common side effects?**

Some of the side effects that you may experience are:

- Increased hair growth. This can be removed (e.g. by electrolysis) or coloured, if troublesome.
- Slightly enlarged or sore gums. Your dentist or pharmacist will be able to suggest treatment for this if it is a problem.
- Shakiness or mild tremor of the hands.
- You may feel a little sick in the early stages, possibly with some abdominal discomfort.
- Hot or burning sensations in the hands and feet. This normally lessens after a couple of weeks.
- Metallic taste in the mouth.
- Cramps and painful periods. Some women may notice that their periods stop while they are on ciclosporin.
- Increased blood pressure and effects on the kidney.
- Increased risk of infections.
- Increased risk of skin cancer. You should avoid excessive exposure to sunlight and UV light, apply high factor sunscreen and wear protective clothing when outside. The use of sunbeds should be avoided.

## **Do I need any special checks while on ciclosporin?**

As ciclosporin has been reported to cause blood disorders leading to weakness or breathlessness, a susceptibility to infections, and a tendency to bruise easily it is important that you have regular blood tests to check for early signs of changes in the blood. It is recommended that this is done weekly for the first month then at 2-3 monthly intervals. The blood tests can be done at in clinic or, with agreement of your GP, at your local surgery.

You should also have your blood pressure checked as ciclosporin can increase blood pressure.

## When should I not take ciclosporin ?

You should not take ciclosporin if you have uncontrolled high blood pressure, kidney problems or any type of cancer.

If you feel unwell, develop a sore throat or any infections, or are unsure about a certain reaction, contact your GP, Gastroenterologist, IBD nurse specialist or pharmacist before taking ciclosporin.

## Does ciclosporin interfere with my other medicines?

Ciclosporin interacts with a large number of other medicines including non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) e.g. ibuprofen, St John's Wort, erythromycin and rosuvastatin.

**ALWAYS** check with a doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicines, including herbal or complimentary medicines and those bought over the counter.

It is safe to drink alcohol in moderation whilst on ciclosporin. Avoid binge drinking as this can seriously affect blood levels of the drug.

You should avoid having 'live' vaccines whilst taking ciclosporin e.g., mumps, measles and rubella (MMR), yellow fever, BCG, some typhoid vaccines and varicella vaccines. If you require travel vaccines or your doctor, nurse or pharmacist advise that you need a vaccine always tell the healthcare professional that you are taking ciclosporin. Seasonal vaccination against influenza and pneumococcal vaccines are also recommended for adults taking ciclosporin.

## **Is ciclosporin OK during pregnancy and breastfeeding?**

If you are planning to become pregnant or become pregnant while on ciclosporin you should contact your Gastroenterologist to discuss the risks versus benefits of continuing treatment to both you and your unborn baby. Treatment with ciclosporin is not long term (3-6 months). You should not breastfeed if you are taking ciclosporin as it is present in breast milk and can therefore be passed to the baby.

## **Useful contacts**

### **Gastroenterology pharmacist**

Tel: **01865 221 523**

Email: **ibd.homecare@nhs.net**

### **IBD Advice Line**

Tel: **01865 228 772**

Email **ibd.advice@nhs.net**

**Keep all medicines out of the reach of children.**

**Never give any medication prescribed for you to anyone else.**

**It may harm them even if their symptoms are the same as yours.**

## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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