

Haematology

Mycophenolate mofetil (MMF) for people with an autoimmune disorder

The immune system is your body's natural defence against infection and disease. Sometimes the immune system can malfunction and attack the healthy cells, tissues and organs. This is called an autoimmune disorder.

In Haematology we manage a number of autoimmune disorders such as Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP) and Auto Immune Haemolytic Anaemia (AIHA).

As a result of the immune system going wrong, you can develop anaemia or low platelets, which can be associated with tiredness, fatigue, breathlessness, bruising, and bleeding.

Most people with an autoimmune disease live a normal life. The symptoms of autoimmune diseases can be controlled using medicines. Sometimes these conditions may go into remission or disappear. They may also flare up and become problematic.

Mycophenolate mofetil

Mycophenolate mofetil (MMF) is an immunosuppressant medicine. It is used to dampen down the immune system, control inflammation and put the autoimmune disease into remission. MMF is often introduced after starting steroids and can reduce the time you need to stay on steroids.



Patient Information

MMF is started at a low dose. This dose is gradually increased based on your blood tests and clinical response. It may take up to 3 months to see a response to MMF.

MMF is taken by mouth. It is available in both tablet form and liquid suspension. Take MMF with or just after a meal.

When taking MMF:

- Swallow the capsule whole with a glass of water
- Do not break or crush the capsules
- Do not take any capsules that have broken or split open

Take care not to let any powder from inside a broken capsule get onto you skin or into your eyes or mouth. If this happens rinse thoroughly with plain water.

Possible reactions/side effects

MMF can have side effects, although not everyone experiences them. Most of these effects are reduced by starting with a low dose of MMF and gradually increasing the dose over time. You will be monitored closely in the clinic whilst you are taking immunosuppressant medicines.

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you experience any side effects. Known common side effects to MMF are:

- Reduced immunity to infection
- Nausea, vomiting
- Change in bowel habit (diarrhoea or constipation)
- Headache
- Reduced white cell count, leading to increased risk of infection
- Altered liver function
- Cough
- High blood pressure

Patient Information

- Fluid retention
- Allergic reaction. If you have swelling of your face, lips, tongue or throat with difficulty in breathing you must tell your treating team immediately.

MMF is a powerful human teratogen with an increased risk of causing miscarriage and congenital malformations when taken during pregnancy.

If you are of childbearing potential it is important that you take precautions to prevent pregnancy whilst taking MMF. Women of childbearing potential must use at least one form of reliable contraception before starting MMF, during treatment and for 6 weeks after stopping treatment. Using 2 complementary forms of contraception at the same time is preferred.

MMF is not recommended if you are breastfeeding.

Vaccines

Most vaccines are safe to have whilst taking MMF. However live vaccines should be avoided and alternatives offered. Examples of live vaccines include shingles (Zostavax), MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella), nasal flu, and yellow fever.

Talk to your doctor or specialist nurse if you need to have a vaccine and are unsure whether it is live.

Contact details

Haematology Specialist Nurses (during office hours):

Coventry: 024 7696 5546

Rugby: 01788 663 171

Ward 34 (out of hours, evenings/weekends/bank holidays):

024 7696 5390

Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 01788 661 371 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smokefree policy.

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