

Extended-release tacrolimus after a transplant – Advagraf



After a transplant, you'll need to take this medication. This sheet explains:

- what this medication is for
- how to take it
- what you need to pay attention to



ATTENTION

The extended-release tacrolimus called Advagraf is different from the following medications:

- the extended-release tacrolimus called Envarsus
- the immediate-release tacrolimus called Prograf

Other health sheets explain how to take Envarsus and Prograf.

Why do I need to take this medication?

The immune system is your body's defense system. It protects you from germs. Since it doesn't recognize the organ you received, it may reject it.

You're given medications to suppress these immune responses and prevent rejection.

These medications are called "anti-rejection drugs" or "immunosuppressants". **Extended-release tacrolimus is the most important of these medications.**

For how long?

Tacrolimus must be taken for the rest of your life. **Never stop taking it without talking to your care team.**

To prevent rejection, make sure you never run out of this medication.

How do I take this medication?

You need to swallow the capsules whole.

You must never bite into them, cut them, crush them, or open them.

The dosage will be adjusted often, based on the amount of medication measured in your blood. The number of capsules, or how they look, may change depending on what your doctor prescribes. Never change the dosage on your own.

Depending on the prescribed dosage, long-acting tacrolimus comes in the following capsules:



0.5 mg

1 mg

3 mg

5 mg

When should I take this medication?

Take the prescribed dose once a day, every morning, at the same time. That way, you'll always have the same amount of medication in your blood to protect your new organ.

It's best to take tacrolimus on an empty stomach. Take it 1 hour before your meal or 2 hours after.



IMPORTANT

On blood test days, take your dose AFTER the blood test. Taking this medication before could produce false results.



What should I do if I forget to take a dose?

- You can take it **within 12 hours after the usual time**, even if you've eaten.
- **After more than 12 hours**, skip the dose.

You should never double a dose.



If you're unsure what to do, call your pharmacist or a member of the transplant team.

Do I need to take another dose if I vomit?

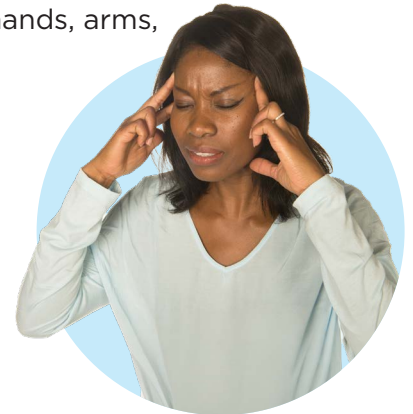
This medication doesn't cause vomiting. But here's what you need to do if you're vomiting for another reason.

- **If you vomit less than 30 minutes** after taking the medication, take another dose.
- **If you vomit more than 30 minutes** after taking the medication, don't take another dose.

What are the most common side effects?

The medication sometimes causes the following side effects:

- Tremors in the hands, arms, or legs
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Higher blood pressure
- Higher blood sugar levels
- Hair loss for a few months



Taking tacrolimus also increases the risk of developing the following diseases:

- Infections. See the health sheet [*Preventing infections after a transplant*](#). See also, in the Useful Resources box, the health sheets on medications to take to prevent infections.
- Skin cancer. It's very important to use a good sunscreen lotion (SPF 30 or higher, SPF 60 ideally). See the health sheet [*Protéger sa peau du soleil pendant un traitement*](#) (French only).

You're strongly advised to always carry information that would be useful for paramedics, such as **an I.D. card or a medical bracelet that indicates you've had a transplant.**

What precautions should I take with this medication?

Make sure you're always given capsules from the same manufacturer, unless the doctor allows you to change.

STORAGE

Always keep the medication in a place that:

- is dry
- has a steady temperature ranging between 15°C (59°F) and 30°C (86°F)
- is protected from light
- is out of reach of children and pets

Bring back to the pharmacy any capsules you didn't take. Never throw them in the trash.

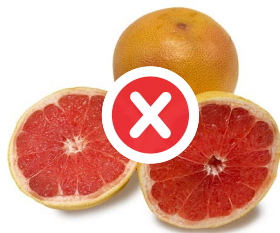
Anyone besides yourself must wear gloves to touch the medication.



DIET

Don't eat the following fruits or drink their juice:

- grapefruit
- tangelo
- pomelo
- blood orange
- Seville orange



These fruits can interact with the drug and increase the risk of side effects. Follow your dietitian's instructions.

ALCOHOL

Check with your doctor to see if you can take alcohol with your medication. It varies from one person to another.

OTHER MEDICATIONS AND NATURAL PRODUCTS

You can't take certain over-the-counter medications and natural health products, such as Advil, antacids, St. John's wort, or echinacea. These can reduce the effectiveness of tacrolimus or increase its side effects. Check with your pharmacist or care team.

Also talk with them before getting any vaccine.



Always have with you an up-to-date list of all the medications and natural health products you're taking.

Tell every healthcare professional you see that you're taking tacrolimus.

PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING

If you want to have a child or to breastfeed your baby, talk with your doctor, who will assess whether the medications you're taking are safe in your situation.

TRAVEL

Ask your pharmacist what you need to plan before you travel. See also the health sheet [*Travelling after a transplant.*](#)



What are the symptoms to watch out for?

Call one of the emergency numbers you've been given right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Oral temperature higher than 38°C (100.4°F)
- Chills
- Extreme fatigue
- Weakness
- Stomach pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Vision problems (blurred vision, loss of part of your field of vision)
- Trouble coordinating your movements
- Memory problems
- Coughing
- Frequent and painful urination
- A wound that is reddish and feels warm



This list isn't complete. If you're unsure, contact your care team.

Who can I talk to for help or to ask questions?

Your care team will give you the numbers to call if you have questions or need help.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Health sheets on medications to take to prevent infections:

[Éviter les infections après une greffe de foie - Par des médicaments](#) (French only)

[Éviter les infections après une greffe de rein - Par des médicaments](#) (French only)

[Éviter les infections après une greffe de poumon - Par des médicaments](#) (French only)

The video [Extended-release Tacrolimus \(Advagraf or Envarsus\)](#) explains how to take this medication and what the side effects are. To watch it, put the QR code in front of your phone or tablet's camera.



You can also watch other videos on [medications to take after a transplant](#) on the CHUM's YouTube page. youtube.com/@chumontreal



Questions

The content of this document in no way replaces the advice of your healthcare professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal [**chumontreal.qc.ca**](https://chumontreal.qc.ca)

