

Cyclophosphamide



What is cyclophosphamide?

- An immunosuppressant that is used to control symptoms and prevent flare-ups in diseases of the immune system such as vasculitis (inflammation in the blood vessels) or glomerulonephritis (inflammation of the kidneys).
- Cyclophosphamide lowers your body's harmful response to diseases of the immune system. It is often used with other medications, such as prednisone.
- Available as 25 mg and 50 mg tablets. Also available as injections (shots).

How do I use it?

- Drink lots of fluids that do not contain caffeine, e.g. 8 to 12 cups a day, unless told otherwise by your doctor.

Oral:

- Cyclophosphamide tablets are taken orally once a day with food.
- The medication should be swallowed whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.

Shot:

- Given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time by a nurse.
- A blood test may be taken before each treatment. Do remember to have the blood work done, if scheduled, because the dose and timing of cyclophosphamide may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- You should empty your bladder (pass urine) often—every 2 hours while you are awake and at bedtime for at least 24 hours after your dose. Your doctor may also tell you to get up at night to empty your bladder.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

Oral:

- Take the missed dose as soon as you remember.
- If it is close to the time of your next dose, skip it and go back to your normal schedule.
- Do not “double-up” the dose as this may increase side effects.
- It is very important to take each dose of cyclophosphamide because missing even a few doses may cause flare-ups of symptoms.
- The dose of cyclophosphamide is based on your weight and is specific to your medical condition. Do not change your dose without talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

Shot:

- Call your doctor's office or kidney care clinic as soon as possible if you missed your scheduled infusion.
- It is very important to come for each cyclophosphamide infusion as missing even a few doses may cause flare-ups of symptoms. Mark the dates of your scheduled cyclophosphamide infusions on your calendar to avoid any missed doses and do all required blood work ahead of time so the blood work results can be reviewed by the doctor before you come in for the infusion.
- The dose, frequency and duration of cyclophosphamide infusions are based on your weight and specific to your medical condition.

What side effects should I expect?

- Check your blood work regularly; this is important to detect and minimize the side effects of cyclophosphamide.
- Common side effects include nausea, vomiting, headache, hair loss or thinning of the hair. Hair will most often grow back when the medication is stopped. Some side effects may decrease as your body gets used to the medication. If these symptoms continue or become bothersome, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.
- Cyclophosphamide can cause bladder irritation. This risk may be decreased by drinking enough fluids and emptying your bladder often as outlined above. Contact your doctor right away if you have any difficulty or pain with passing urine, or blood in the urine.
- Cyclophosphamide may decrease the production of red blood cells (anemia) and platelets in the body. Contact your doctor if you notice any unusual tiredness, bleeding or easy bruising.
- Cyclophosphamide may also affect your ability to get pregnant (depending on the cyclophosphamide dose and your age). If you plan to have children, discuss with your doctor.
- Since cyclophosphamide lowers your body's ability to fight off infections, wash your hands often and stay away from people with infections, colds or flu. Contact your doctor right away if you feel you may have a cold or other infection, e.g. if you experience high fever, chills, very bad sore throat, chest congestion, pain with passing urine, etc.
- Cyclophosphamide may increase your chance of getting bladder cancer, blood cancer and other kinds of cancers in rare cases. Contact your family doctor to ensure

you have the recommended screening tests performed for people of your age and sex.

Drug interactions with cyclophosphamide

- Cyclophosphamide can interact with a large number of medications.
- You should discuss with your doctor or pharmacist before beginning any new medications (non-prescription and prescription), herbal products or vitamins.
- Do not receive any vaccines without talking with your doctor because the use with cyclophosphamide may either increase your chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.

Is cyclophosphamide harmful during pregnancy?

- Cyclophosphamide is NOT recommended in pregnancy as it readily crosses the placenta and can harm the fetus. It can also harm sperm.
- The use of birth control is recommended in women of child bearing potential and in men with a partner of child bearing potential.
- Cyclophosphamide is transferred into breast milk; therefore, breastfeeding is not recommended.

How do I store the medication?

- Store at room temperature away from moisture and sunlight. Do not store in the bathroom. Keep out of reach of children.

Reordering procedure

- To refill your medication, speak to your doctor or pharmacist.