

# Mycophenolate mofetil

(Brand name: Cellcept, Myfortec)

Information about your medicine, benefits, side effects and precautions.

## What is it?

Mycophenolate mofetil is usually a medicine used to treat certain childhood rheumatic conditions (diseases which may affect kidneys, joints, muscles, skin, gut or eyes). This can include lupus (also known as SLE), inflammatory bowel disease, uveitis and scleroderma. It is also used in patients who have had transplants.

Mycophenolate mofetil is a medicine that works by suppressing your immune system. It reduces the damage done by inflammation, rather than just reducing pain.

## How will it help?

Mycophenolate mofetil is a medicine that works slowly. You can expect your child to gradually start feeling better, but it might take one to three months.

## How is mycophenolate mofetil given?

Mycophenolate mofetil is given as a tablet.

## When should it be given?

It is taken twice a day.

## What is the dose?

This depends on the weight of your child. It is usually started at a low dose, which is then increased. The final dose is adjusted according to response and side effects.

## How long will it be used for?

People may stay on mycophenolate mofetil for longer periods (several years) to help keep their disease under control.

## Are there any side effects?

Mycophenolate mofetil is usually effective but, as with all medicines, side effects can occur. Some are common, and some are rare. Most people don't have any problems when they take mycophenolate mofetil.

Most common side effects	Treatment
Nausea (feeling sick) vomiting, loss of appetite & diarrhoea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dose alteration</li> <li>• Take dose with food</li> <li>• Anti-emetics (anti-sickness medication)</li> </ul>
Headache, dizziness, sleeping problems Mood changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify your doctor</li> </ul>
Skin rash / sun sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use high factor sun screen and hats</li> </ul>
Mouth ulcers Sore gums Sore throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dose reduction; tell your child's doctor</li> </ul>

Rare side effects	Treatment
Disturbance in the blood counts (change in blood tests results) Upset liver function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually returns to normal if mycophenolate dose reduced or stopped</li> </ul>

## Things you need to know when taking this medicine

### What to do if your child is sick

It is safe to give mycophenolate mofetil if your child has a common cold or cough. Don't give mycophenolate mofetil if your child:

- Has a high fever
- Has had vomiting/ diarrhoea
- Has been in contact with chickenpox, shingles or herpes zoster
- Is sick and you're not sure why

If you're not sure, talk to your doctor before giving the mycophenolate mofetil.

### Interactions

Mycophenolate can be taken with other medicines. This includes prescription medicines, natural medicines and medicines that you can buy over the counter.

### Immunisations

Most immunisations are safe to give (flu vaccine, cervical cancer vaccine, killed polio vaccine (IPV) etc) when taking this medicine.

Live virus vaccines (such as mumps, measles, rubella (MMR), polio (OPV)), varicella (chicken pox) and some travel vaccines should not be used.

### Infections

Mycophenolate mofetil can make chickenpox infections more serious. A blood test can be done to see if somebody is already immune to the virus. If your child is in contact with chickenpox or shingles, their doctor should be called.

**This medicine should be kept in a safe place, as accidental overdose can be serious.**

This sheet was produced in association with the Australian Paediatric Rheumatology Group

## Alcohol

Mycophenolate mofetil and alcohol are both broken down by the liver. Drinking alcohol while you are on mycophenolate mofetil can put extra strain on the liver. It is not known how much is safe, so it is suggested that anyone on mycophenolate should avoid drinking alcohol.

## Sexual Health

Being pregnant while on mycophenolate mofetil, can be very harmful for the baby. Patients that are sexually active, should use effective contraception to avoid getting pregnant. Please note that it may change how well the oral contraceptive pill works; maybe use another form of birth control while on this medication.

Having been on mycophenolate mofetil in the past does not change fertility in the future, and it does not change a persons chances of having babies later.

## Myths and misconceptions

You may hear a lot of different information about mycophenolate mofetil from friends, pharmacists or people that you know. If you are worried about anything, please talk to your doctor or nurse for more information.

**If your child is taking mycophenolate mofetil they should see their paediatric rheumatologist regularly to make sure the treatment is working and to minimise any possible side effects.**

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL ARTHRITIS OFFICE FOR MORE INFORMATION SHEETS ON ARTHRITIS.