



CICLOSPORIN FOR SKIN CONDITIONS

Written for parents, children and young people

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THIS LEAFLET?

This leaflet aims to help you understand more about ciclosporin. It will cover what ciclosporin is, how it works to treat skin conditions, how it should be taken, and where you can find more information about it.

WHAT IS THE IMMUNE SYSTEM AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE SKIN?

The immune system protects the body from illness. It helps fight off infections, germs and viruses.

In some skin conditions, the immune system becomes overactive and starts to attack healthy skin. This causes inflammation, which can make the skin itchy, sore, dry, flaky or red (or darker than your usual skin tone).

Conditions like eczema and psoriasis are examples for this. They are usually long-term (chronic) and can flare up from time to time.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT INFLAMMATORY SKIN CONDITIONS?

There are many treatments that help calm inflammation and relieve symptoms, like itching and irritation. These include topical treatments (creams and ointments that go directly on the skin). They include:

- [emollients](#)
- [topical corticosteroids](#) (steroid creams and ointments)
- [topical calcineurin inhibitors](#)

If topical treatments are not enough, or if the condition is severe, your healthcare professional might suggest other medicines that work on the immune

system. Ciclosporin is one of these medicines.

WHAT IS CICLOSPORIN AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Ciclosporin is a medicine that tells the immune system to slow down. It is known as an **immunomodulator** – this means it changes how the immune system works.

By calming the immune system, ciclosporin can reduce inflammation. This helps the skin feel less itchy and sore and can improve your symptoms.

WHICH SKIN CONDITIONS ARE TREATED WITH CICLOSPORIN?

Ciclosporin is used to treat skin conditions such as:

- [eczema](#)
- [psoriasis](#)
- hives (chronic urticaria)

It is used both in children and adults.

IS CICLOSPORIN SAFE?

It is important that we always consider the safety of a medication before we take it. This involves balancing the possible risks and benefits.

Ciclosporin has been used for many years to treat skin and other inflammatory conditions. Most side effects are mild and typically go away when treatment is stopped.

When ciclosporin is used to treat children with inflammatory diseases who are below 16 years of age, it is being used outside of its normal license. It is important to note that ciclosporin has been tested in children and is considered to be a safe and good

treatment option. (For more information, see the resources for unlicensed and off-licence medicines in the last section of this leaflet)

WHEN AND HOW SHOULD CICLOSPORIN BE TAKEN?

Ciclosporin can be taken as a capsule or liquid. The dose depends on your weight. The dose is usually within the range of 2-5mg for every kg of body weight **per day**. **This will be divided into two doses.**

Care should be taken to make sure that the correct dose and strength has been prescribed and dispensed to you. You must always check the dose and strength with your pharmacist or doctor before taking ciclosporin. If you take too much ciclosporin, please inform your doctor immediately as treatment may be required to reverse this.

There are different brands of ciclosporin, which work similarly. Your doctor will try to prescribe the same brand each time, but this may not always be possible.

The dose will be adjusted according to how your body reacts to the medicine and if you experience any side effects.

All brands of ciclosporin capsules contain small amounts of alcohol (ethanol).

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE BEFORE CICLOSPORIN HAS AN EFFECT?

Ciclosporin is a fast-acting medicine. You may notice improvement within 4 weeks. If your skin does not improve after 4 weeks, your doctor may adjust your dose.

HOW LONG DO I NEED TO TAKE CICLOSPORIN?

This depends on your skin condition. Some people take ciclosporin for a few months, others may need it for up to a year or more. Your healthcare professional will be able to advise on how long you should be on treatment for.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS ON CICLOSPORIN?

As with any medication, ciclosporin has possible side effects. Most of them are mild and will go away when the treatment is stopped.

Some people may notice more hair growth and gum overgrowth, headaches and shaky hands. Others may feel sick, vomit, or have stomach pain or get diarrhoea when first start taking ciclosporin. These symptoms usually go away after 2 weeks.

For less common side effects of ciclosporin, check the drug information leaflet in your prescription pack.

In adults, ciclosporin can affect the kidneys and raise blood pressure. This is rare in children and young people. Regular blood tests and monitoring help ensure ciclosporin is taken safely.

Ciclosporin may also make your skin sensitive to sunlight. To protect yourself, use high factor suncream (SPF 30 or more), wear a hat, and keep your skin covered when you go outside, especially in the summer.

If you develop any of the following side-effects, it is important to contact your medical team (dermatologist or specialist nurse) immediately. If it is out of office hours, contact your local NHS out of hours services:

- A cough, sore throat, fever (temperature over 38 °C) or signs of infection
- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Headaches and changes in your vision
- Tingling or numb hands and feet
- Mouth ulcers

If you have any new symptoms you think might be caused by ciclosporin, please seek medical advice.



HOW IS CICLOSPORIN MONITORED FOR SIDE EFFECTS?

People on ciclosporin will be monitored regularly to check if ciclosporin is working and if there are any side effects. This includes blood pressure checks and blood tests.

The medical team will organise regular blood tests for the following reasons:

- Before you start taking ciclosporin, to check whether it is a safe and suitable treatment option for you.
- To identify any possible side effects or unusual changes to your body.
- So that your medication or dose can be changed if necessary.

You must not take ciclosporin unless you have regular monitoring.

National registries: The BAD Biologic Interventions Register (BADBIR) (psoriasis) and ASTAR (eczema) register.

You may be asked to take part in a national register if you are prescribed ciclosporin. These registers collect valuable information on side effects and benefits of the drug. It will also inform doctors on how best to use medicines. No information will be passed to the register without your informed consent.

CAN VACCINATIONS BE GIVEN WHILE TAKING CICLOSPORIN?

You should not have any 'live' vaccinations while taking ciclosporin. Live vaccines contain small amount of weakened pathogen (virus or bacteria) which may cause infection if your immune system is lowered.

Examples of live vaccines include:

- measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)
- polio

- Rotavirus
- typhoid
- yellow fever
- varicella (chickenpox)
- nasal flu (influenza) vaccine

If you have never had chickenpox, your healthcare professional might suggest having the vaccine before you start ciclosporin. If this was not possible and you come into contact with someone who has chickenpox or shingles, contact your doctor straight away. You may need special treatment to stop you getting ill.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW?

Do not to take grapefruit products while taking ciclosporin. Grapefruit can change the way ciclosporin works in your body and may cause you serious harm. If you do use any grapefruit products, contact NHS 111 or your healthcare professional for advice.

CAN OTHER MEDICINES BE TAKEN WITH CICLOSPORIN?

Some medicines can interact with ciclosporin and increase the risk of side effects. Always tell your doctors, pharmacists and nurses that you are taking ciclosporin, including if you are prescribed any new medications.

WHERE CAN MORE INFORMATION BE FOUND ABOUT CICLOSPORIN?

Speak with your doctor or nurse if you have questions or concerns. This leaflet does not include every possible side effect of ciclosporin. For more details, see the information leaflet that comes with your ciclosporin medicine.

It is important to report suspected side effects of medicines. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) manages the Yellow Card scheme. This scheme collects information and safety concerns about medicines and



medical devices. Anyone can report these side effects or concerns by using:

- the Yellow Card website
www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard or
- the Yellow Card app

Weblinks to other relevant sources:

Information on unlicensed medicines for children

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk/advice-guides/general-information-about-medicines/unlicensed-medicines/

Jargon Buster:

www.skinhealthinfo.org.uk/support-resources/jargon-buster/

Please note that the British Association of Dermatologists provides web links to additional resources to help people access a range of information about their treatment or skin condition. The views expressed in these external resources may not be shared by the BAD or its members. The BAD has no control of and does not endorse the content of external links.



This leaflet aims to provide accurate information about the subject and is a consensus of the views held by representatives of the British Society for Paediatric and Adolescent Dermatology (BSPAD) and the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD): individual patient circumstances may differ, which might alter both the advice and course of therapy given to you by your doctor.

This leaflet has been assessed for readability by the British Association of Dermatologists' Patient Information Lay Review Panel

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF
DERMATOLOGISTS**

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

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