

Tacrolimus



Tacrolimus Immediate Release (Brand Name: PROGRAF)	Tacrolimus Extended Release (Brand Name: ADVAGRAF)	Tacrolimus liquid
Taken twice daily	Taken once daily	Taken twice daily
0.5 mg - yellow capsule 	0.5 mg – yellow & orange capsule 	Concentration may vary – please confirm dose 
1 mg – white capsule 	1 mg – white & orange capsule 	
5 mg – red capsule 	3 mg – orange capsule 	
	5 mg – red & orange capsule 	

What is tacrolimus?

Tacrolimus is a medicine called an immunosuppressant. An immunosuppressant weakens the immune system. It is used to prevent rejection of transplanted organs, such as the kidney, heart, lung, and liver. The medicine works like a blanket to cover and hide the kidney from the immune system. In transplant, tacrolimus helps stop your body from attacking your new organ because your body does not recognize the new organ as its own. Tacrolimus may also be used to treat other illnesses which are caused by an overactive immune system, for example nephrotic syndrome.



How should you take tacrolimus?



- Take tacrolimus at the same times every day, spaced 12 hours apart for Prograf and 24 hours apart for Advagraf.
- Always delay the dose until AFTER your bloodwork is taken. We closely monitor the level of tacrolimus in the blood and the level must be taken before the medicine.
- Adherence to this medicine is very important to keep your kidney working well.
- You may take tacrolimus with food or without food. Diet may affect how tacrolimus is absorbed, so be consistent and always take it the same way.
- If taking capsules, these should be swallowed whole. Do not cut, crush, or chew them.
- If giving liquid form, shake the bottle well before measuring each dose.
- If tacrolimus is given by someone who is not taking the medicine, that person should wear gloves to avoid touching tacrolimus. Tacrolimus may be absorbed through the skin and cause unwanted effects over time. Wash hands well after coming into contact with tacrolimus.



What should you do if you miss a dose of tacrolimus?

Missing doses and taking doses late puts your kidney at risk of rejection. The best ways to avoid missing doses are:

- setting reminders on phones or alarm clock, taking medicines with a scheduled activity (such as brushing teeth, with breakfast/bedtime), using dosettes or blister packs, keeping track with a medicine calendar, assisting your child with taking doses.
- Give the missed dose as soon as you remember.
- If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and give the next dose at the regular time. Do not double up on doses.
- ***Remember it is the parent or guardian who is responsible to make sure every dose has been taken.***

What should you do if you vomit after you take tacrolimus?

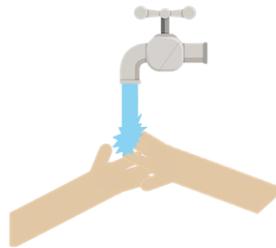
If you throw up within 30 minutes of taking tacrolimus, repeat the dose. If it is longer than 30 minutes, **do not** repeat the dose unless you see medicine in the vomit. **Do not repeat a dose more than once.**

What are the possible side effects of tacrolimus?

Tacrolimus levels are monitored very closely to avoid unwanted side effects. The most common side effects include:

- Trembling or shaking of hands, called tremors
- Mild headaches
- Upset stomach
- Higher risk of infections such as colds, flus, chest infection, urinary tract infection and skin infections
- Higher rates of cancers, including skin cancers and lymphomas

Side effects are more common at higher doses and should get better with time.



What safety measures should be taken while on tacrolimus?

- Wash hands often and thoroughly, especially before eating or touching the face. Hand washing is the most important way to prevent the spread of germs that cause infections.
- Avoid close contact with people who have active infections such as colds or flus.
- Protect the skin with sunscreen and keep out of prolonged direct sunlight to lower the risk of skin cancers. Use at least SPF 30 and reapply often. Wear hats, sunglasses and stay in the shade.
- Ensure you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations and yearly flu shots. You should avoid live vaccinations such as measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), and the chicken pox vaccine as these may put you at risk of getting these illnesses.



Are there any interactions with tacrolimus?

Yes, many medicines interact with tacrolimus which may cause the levels to go too high or too low in the blood. In order to ensure safety, please:

- Let the transplant clinic know if you are starting any new medicines including prescription, over-the-counter, herbal, or natural medicines
- Avoid eating grapefruit, pomelo, tangelos, and their juices (or anything containing these fruits) as they cause the level of tacrolimus to go up and increase the risk of side effects. **Check food labels.**



What other important information should you know?

- Keep a list of all medicines you are taking and bring to each medical appointment.
- Make sure you always have enough tacrolimus on hand. Call your pharmacy at least 2 days before you run out of medicine to avoid missing doses. Some pharmacies need advanced notice to order in the medicine.
- Store tacrolimus at room temperature in a cool, dry place. Do not keep in a bathroom or vehicle.
- Keep medicines out of reach of other children.
- Do not throw old medicine in the garbage or toilet. Please return to a community pharmacy for safe disposal.
- If you develop a fever, please seek medical attention.

