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## Ciclosporin

### Indications for treatment

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Ciclosporin (previous spelling, 'cyclosporin') is a strong immune suppressant drug and is the main agent used to prevent the rejection of transplanted organs (eg. liver, kidneys, heart). It is also registered in New Zealand to treat the following skin conditions:

- Severe [psoriasis](#)
- Severe [atopic dermatitis](#)

### Mechanism of action

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In skin diseases, ciclosporin acts by damping down inflammation in the skin, by its effect on certain immune cells (lymphocytes).

Ciclosporin is normally taken by patients with severe skin disease for a minimum of several months and up to several years.

The dose is usually 2 to 5 mg/kg body weight per day. The capsules should be swallowed whole with a glass of water at the same times each day after breakfast and dinner. It should not be taken with grapefruit juice as this may unpredictably increase the amount of ciclosporin absorbed into the blood stream.

### Monitoring

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As a powerful medication, ciclosporin may have some serious side effects. It is essential to follow your doctor's advice regarding monitoring of your health. This is especially important when you have first been prescribed the medication, but some side effects become more likely after several months' treatment.

- Blood pressure should be measured one- to two-weekly for the first month, then monthly thereafter.
- Kidney function should be tested by blood and urine tests, especially creatinine levels.
- Other regular tests should include: complete blood count, liver function, fasting lipid levels, uric acid.

### Drug Interactions

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Certain medications should be avoided by patients on ciclosporin. If it is essential to receive treatment with one of these medications, you should ensure your health is monitored carefully by your doctor.

Please refer to the manufacturer's data sheet (see [Medsafe](#)) for up-to-date information on drug interactions.

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) eg. indomethacin, naproxen.
- Antibiotics eg. Cotrimoxazole, trimethoprim, [rifampicin](#), [erythromycin](#), ciprofloxacin, tobramycin, gentamicin.
- Anti-epileptics eg. Phenytoin, carbamazepine.
- Antifungals eg. Amphotericin B, [ketoconazole](#), [itraconazole](#), [fluconazole](#).
- St John's wort (*hypericum perforatum*).

## Side Effects

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Side-effects from ciclosporin may include:

- Hypertension (high blood pressure) which may require additional medication for control.
- A reduction in renal function, which may necessitate reducing the dose of ciclosporin or occasionally stopping it.
- Increased hair growth (bleaching, shaving, and hair removal creams may be used).
- Loss of appetite and nausea.
- Paraesthesia (pins and needles sensation) in fingers, toes or lips.
- Tremor.
- Swollen or bleeding gums. Brush your teeth regularly and massage your gums with a soft toothbrush. Use dental floss daily, and attend for regular dental check-ups.
- Increased risk of bacterial, fungal or viral infections. See your doctor promptly if you feel unwell.
- Possible increased risk of cancer, particularly [skin cancer](#). Protect yourself from [sun exposure](#) – wear [covering clothing](#) outdoors, and apply broad spectrum [sunscreen](#) to all exposed skin daily. [Phototherapy](#) (ultraviolet treatment including UVB and PUVA) should be avoided during ciclosporin treatment.

If you are prescribed ciclosporin for your skin condition, discuss the side effects with your dermatologist. Make sure you understand what to expect, and how to deal with any problems.

Once the skin condition has stabilised on ciclosporin, your [dermatologist](#) will advise you to slowly reduce the daily dose of the medication to the minimum which controls the skin condition. Often it is necessary to stop it altogether for a few months to allow side effects to resolve. When ciclosporin is discontinued, the skin condition usually slowly reappears. It can usually be retreated with further ciclosporin or another medication.

### Related information

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#### On other web sites:

- [Medsafe](#) consumer information on Neoral

#### Books about skin diseases:

See the [DermNet NZ bookstore](#)

DermNet does not provide an on-line consultation service.

If you have any concerns with your skin or its treatment, see a [dermatologist](#) for advice.

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