

Tacrolimus

Names	The generic drug name is tacrolimus (ta-KROE-li-mus). Prograf® is a brand name. There may be other names for this medication)
Why is Tacrolimus Given?	Tacrolimus belongs to a group of medicines known as immunosuppressants. It is used along with other medications to prevent rejection (attack of a transplanted organ by the immune system of a person receiving the organ) in people who have received transplanted tissues or organs.
How is it Given?	Tacrolimus comes as a capsule, to be taken by mouth. It is usually taken 2 times a day. Space your doses 12 hours apart, and take it at the same times every day. Follow the directions on your prescription label carefully. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Take tacrolimus exactly as directed. Do not take more or less of it or take it more often than prescribed.
How Does it Work?	Tacrolimus works by decreasing your body's natural immunity, to prevent it from attacking transplanted tissue or organs. Tacrolimus can only prevent rejection of your transplant as long as you are taking the medication. Continue to take tacrolimus even if you feel well. Do not stop taking tacrolimus without talking to your doctor. It is also available as an injection.
What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?	Tell your doctor if you: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have had an allergic reaction to tacrolimus or any medications• are taking any prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, or nutritional supplements. . Many medications may interact with tacrolimus, so be sure to tell your doctor about all the medications you are taking. Some of the more common ones are antacids, antifungals, calcium channel blockers birth control pills, patches, rings, inserts, or injections that contain hormones, HIV protease inhibitors, and certain antibiotics, diuretics, and antiseizure medications

- are taking or have recently stopped taking cyclosporine (Gengraf®, Neoral®, or Sandimmune®).
- are taking any herbal products, especially St. John's wort
- have or have ever had heart, kidney, or liver disease. are having surgery, including dental surgery
- have chickenpox (also called herpes zoster or shingles, diabetes mellitus (high level of sugar in your blood), hyperkalemia (high potassium in the blood), nervous system problems, or an infection
- are pregnant or breastfeeding

This drug may interact with other medications or cause harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal or diet supplements you take.

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Headache, dizziness, weakness
- Uncontrollable shaking of any part of your body
- Diarrhea and/or constipation
- Loss of appetite, heartburn, stomach pain, nausea, and/or vomiting
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Back and/or joint pain
- Burning, numbness, pain, or tingling in your hands or feet
- Rash and/or itching

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen headache, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- If you have nausea, try foods and drinks that are 'easy on the stomach' or made you feel better when you were sick in the past (ginger ale, bland foods, toast). Try eating small, frequent meals and avoid fried, spicy, and/or fatty foods.
- To help minimize mouth sores, rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ teaspoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of water after every meal and at bedtime; brush your teeth and gums with a soft toothbrush; and avoid smoking, alcohol, and mouthwashes that contain alcohol.

- Use sun block with SPF 30 or higher on skin and lip when you are outdoors, even for a short time. Cover up when you are out in the sun. Wear sunglasses, wide-brimmed hats, long-sleeved shirts, and pants. Keep your neck, chest, and back covered.
- If you develop a rash, do not put anything on it unless it is approved by your doctor.

When Should I Call the Doctor?

Call your doctor right away if you experience:

- any sign of infection: fever of 100.5°F (38°C) or higher, chills, cough, sore throat, pain or burning upon urination, redness or tenderness along a vein, at an IV site, or at any other wound or skin irritation
- unusual bruising or bleeding: bleeding lasts more than 10-15 minutes or that causes dizziness; black or bloody stools; vomit that is bloody or that looks like coffee grounds; blood in your urine or phlegm /mucus, unusually heavy menstrual bleeding, spontaneous bleeding from your gums or nose, or superficial bleeding into the skin that appears as a rash of pinpoint-sized reddish-purple spots (petechiae)
- decreased urination; swelling of the arms, hands, feet, ankles, or lower legs; and/or weight gain
- seizures or loss of consciousness

Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have:

- nausea that not relieved by prescribed medication and/or that prevents you from eating or drinking
- painful mouth or throat that makes it difficult to eat or drink
- headache unrelieved by prescribed medication
- yellowing of the skin or eyes
- persistent loss of appetite or weight loss

What Else Should I Know About Tacrolimus?

- The effects of tacrolimus may cause increased infections and delayed healing. Dental work, whenever possible, should be completed before you start taking tacrolimus.
- Tacrolimus can increase your risk for infection. To help avoid infections, stay away from people with colds, flu, or other infections. Wash your hands often. Be careful when handling

sharp objects. Stay away from rough sports or other situations where you could be bruised, cut, or injured. Use an electric razor. Talk to your doctor before you have any vaccinations.

- Tacrolimus may increase your risk for getting skin cancer. *Stay out of direct sunlight.* Follow the instructions under *Managing Side Effects.* Do not use a sun lamp or a tanning bed. If you do notice any changes to your skin, call your doctor.
- Tacrolimus may cause high blood pressure. Your doctor will monitor your blood pressure carefully, and may prescribe medication if necessary.
- You should know that there is a risk that you will develop diabetes during your treatment with tacrolimus. Tell your doctor if you or anyone in your family has or has ever had diabetes. If you experience excessive thirst; excessive hunger; frequent urination; blurred vision or confusion, call your doctor immediately.
- Do not stop taking this medicine without first checking with your doctor.
- If you miss a dose of tacrolimus and remember it within 12 hours, take the missed dose. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose, go back to your regular schedule
- **Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice while you are taking this medicine** as it may increase the effects of this drug.
- Store this medicine away from heat and direct light. Do not store in the bathroom, near the kitchen sink, or in other damp places.
- If you become pregnant while taking tacrolimus, call your doctor.
- If you have any other questions about tacrolimus, please ask your doctor or pharmacist.