



Tacrolimus Reference Guide

Tacrolimus is a medication that allogeneic stem cell transplant patients take after transplant to prevent graft-vs-host disease (GVHD). GVHD is when the cells in your donor's stem cells attack your body's tissue. It can happen in many different systems of the body. GVHD is a common complication after allogeneic stem cell transplant, though it does not affect all patients. Tacrolimus is also called Prograf® or FK506. Dana-Farber most commonly uses 0.5 mg and 1 mg capsules of tacrolimus, but it may also be prescribed in 5 mg tablets or in liquid form.

How to Take Tacrolimus & Manage Your Dosing

- Take tacrolimus as directed. This may be once per day or twice per day.
- Take tacrolimus at the same time(s) each day to help keep a steady level of tacrolimus in your body.
- If you feel nauseous or if you think you might vomit, take your nausea medicine before taking tacrolimus.
- Take tacrolimus with or without food, and be consistent.

The dose of tacrolimus you take may change frequently. That means the instructions on the pill bottle you receive from the pharmacy will not always match the instructions from your doctor. **Always follow your doctor's instructions.** We will measure your tacrolimus level through blood tests during your visits to Dana-Farber and let you know if your dose needs to change.

- If we don't call you, keep taking the same dose of tacrolimus. **No call, no change.**
- If you need a different tacrolimus dose, we will call you and tell you what your new dose is. Be very careful calculating how many capsules in your new dose. If you want help figuring out how many capsules to take, call your care team (MD or NP/PA).
- If you use a pill box, be sure to change out the tacrolimus capsules every time your dose changes.

Sample Dosing

If your dose is 3.5 mg two times per day

AM



PM



Do's and Don'ts of Taking Tacrolimus

Don't

- Don't take tacrolimus in the morning before you come to Dana-Farber for bloodwork.
- Never stop taking tacrolimus without talking to your Dana-Farber care team.
- Don't take any herbal supplements as they can interact with tacrolimus.
- Don't eat or drink anything with grapefruit, grapefruit juice, blood oranges, Sunny Delight, Fresca or Squirt.
- Don't breastfeed while taking tacrolimus.

Do

- Call your care team before you take any new medications, vitamins, minerals, or supplements as tacrolimus can interact with other medications.
- Request refills for tacrolimus before you run out.
- Talk to your doctor about birth control options while taking tacrolimus.
- Keep this medication safe from children in your home.
- Wash your hands after handling the liquid form of tacrolimus.

On Days When You Come to Dana-Farber for Blood Work

- Don't take tacrolimus in the morning when you come to Dana-Farber for blood work. If you take sirolimus, don't take it either. We will check your tacrolimus level when we do blood work at Dana-Farber.
- Bring your tacrolimus with you to Dana-Farber to take after your blood has been drawn.
- Take the rest of your medicines at their normal times.
- If the level of tacrolimus in your blood is too high or too low, your dose will be changed starting with the PM dose.

Possible Side Effects of Tacrolimus

Tacrolimus has many possible side effects. Some people have more side effects, some have less. Common side effects include:

- High blood pressure
- Headache
- Tremors or shaking
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea or constipation

Call your care team if your side effects are hard to control, won't go away, or if you notice something that worries you.

When to Call Your Care Team

- If you want help calculating your new dose.
- Before you take any new medicine, even if another doctor asks you to take it.
- Before you take any new supplements or any new over-the-counter medicines. Tacrolimus can interact with other medications and herbal supplements; therefore, it is important to notify your care team of new medications.

Common Questions

What should I do if I vomit after taking tacrolimus?

If it has been more than 30 minutes since you took tacrolimus and if you don't see any tacrolimus capsules in the vomit, don't take any more tacrolimus until your next dose.

If it has been less than 30 minutes since you took tacrolimus or if you do see tacrolimus capsules in the vomit, you need to take that dose again.

What if I miss a dose of tacrolimus?

Take your missed dose if you realize within 4 hours of a missing it; otherwise skip that dose. Be sure to tell your care team if you miss a dose.

The instructions on the bottle are different from my doctor's instructions. What do I do?

The dose of tacrolimus you take may change frequently. That means the instructions on the pill bottle you receive from the pharmacy will not always match the instructions from your doctor.

Always follow your doctor's instructions.

What if there are different colored capsules in the tacrolimus bottle?

Call the pharmacist. Sometimes, a medication looks different when it is made by different manufacturers. Or different doses of the same medication may look different. Call your pharmacist to confirm you have received the correct medication.

What if I can't afford my medicines?

Call your Dana-Farber care team **right away** if you have concerns about paying for your medicines. We will connect you with someone who can help with financial resources.

More Information about Tacrolimus

An interactive video, **How to Take Tacrolimus**, is on the Stem Cell Transplant Patient Education website: sctpatiented.dana-farber.org.

Go to **After Allogeneic Transplant** then to **Medication Guidelines**.