

Treatment with oral pulses of cyclophosphamide

Cyclophosphamide is a powerful drug that works by suppressing the immune system. It is used in the treatment of lupus (SLE), vasculitis, and some other conditions where the immune system is responsible for damaging the body ('autoimmune' diseases). It is also used in some anti-cancer treatments. Treatment can be with daily cyclophosphamide tablets, or in 'pulses' – large doses given once every few weeks. Pulse treatment is usually given by injection, requiring a few hours in hospital, but sometimes it may be safe and simpler to give it as tablets.

These are the instructions for taking pulse cyclophosphamide as tablets. The precise dose is not mentioned here as it varies according to your size and to the results of blood tests.

You should have had a blood count within a week or so before starting each cyclophosphamide pulse.

- Drink 2-3 litres (preferably 3 litres) every day during this treatment
- Start treatment in the morning (so that you can drink plenty during the day)
- Start by taking an **ondansetron** tablet (either just before cyclophosphamide, or 1-2h before)
- Then take the **cyclophosphamide** tablets with plenty of fluid
- Then take **Mesna** tablets, one 400mg tablet three times each day on every day when you are taking cyclophosphamide. One should be taken last thing at night.
- Continue **ondansetron**, one 8mg tablet twice each day while you are taking cyclophosphamide

- Cyclophosphamide and Mesna are usually continued for **2 or 3 days**

- Ondansetron should be continued for one or two days after that (the first time, for two or three days), to a total of **3 to 6 days**. Some people need a higher dose than this, or alternatives to ondansetron.

- Other medicines should be taken as usual during cyclophosphamide treatment.

A blood count is needed 10-14 days after starting each pulse, to show that the dose of cyclophosphamide was enough, and not too much.

If you develop a fever or other significant health problem during the two weeks after starting a cyclophosphamide pulse, it is very important that you seek medical advice. If you have a fever you will certainly need examination and blood tests to make sure that it is not an infection that has occurred because of suppression of the immune system.