Your dermatologist has prescribed cyclosporine to treat your skin condition. This handout explains cyclosporine doses, monitoring, side effects, and drug interactions.

Cyclosporine is a medicine that suppresses the immune system. It is often given to people who have had an organ transplant because it helps prevent rejection of the transplanted organ. At lower doses, cyclosporine is used to treat psoriasis.

Cyclosporine is also used “off-label” to treat many other skin conditions. Off-label means that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved using a certain drug for some conditions, even though the drug is an effective treatment. Some of the off-label uses of cyclosporine are using it to treat severe eczema, *pyoderma gangrenosum* (a condition that causes skin ulcers, or sores), and various autoimmune disorders. Talk with your doctor about using cyclosporine for any of these, or other, skin conditions.

**Doses**

Cyclosporine comes in 25 mg and 100 mg tablets. A typical starting dose might be 125 mg (1 big tablet and 1 little tablet) 2 times a day. Please read and follow the dose instructions on your prescription bottle.

When you return for your follow-up visit, your dose may be adjusted up or down. This may be done at each visit until you reach a stable dose that is right for your body. It usually takes 1 to 2 months to reach a stable dose.

**Monitoring**

We will check your blood pressure and do some basic lab tests every 2 weeks to make sure that your body is handling the medicine well. Once your dose is stable, we will do these tests once a month.

**Side Effects**

Some people develop high blood pressure while they are taking cyclosporine. If this happens to you, you may need to stop taking the medicine. Rarely, some people also develop changes in their kidney or liver function, or in their cholesterol, potassium, or magnesium levels. It is important to find these problems early to prevent more serious problems later.
Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

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Some other possible side effects from cyclosporine are:

- Tremor (shakiness)
- Headache
- Numbness or tingling
- Nausea or stomach discomfort
- Diarrhea
- Swollen gums
- Increased hair growth
- High blood pressure
- Kidney dysfunction

Call your doctor if you have:

- A fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C)
- Chills
- An illness that lasts a long time

Drug and Food Interactions

Follow these guidelines to avoid drug and food interactions while you are taking cyclosporine:

- Avoid potassium-sparing diuretics (spironolactone and others). Diuretics are drugs that increase the amount of urine your body produces. If you take a diuretic and are not sure what kind it is, ask your doctor.

- Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice, as they may change the cyclosporine levels in your blood.

- Avoid the high blood pressure medicines diltiazem and verapamil, as they may change the cyclosporine levels in your blood. Brand names for these medicines are: Cardizem, Cartia, Dilacor, Dilt-CD, Diltia, Taztia, Tiazac, Calan, Covera, Isotopin, and Verelan. Other high blood pressure medicines are safer.

- Cyclosporine may also interact with certain statins, drugs that are used to treat high cholesterol. If you need to take medicine for high cholesterol, atorvastatin (Lipitor) is usually the safest choice.