



London Health Sciences Centre

Multi-Organ Transplant Program

**University Hospital
Patient Medication Information
Pharmacy Services 519-663-3172**

Brand Name: Advagraf®
Common Names: tacrolimus extended release (ER)
(also known as FK-506)

What is it?

Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) is a very potent immunosuppressive drug which helps prevent you from rejecting your transplanted organ(s). You will probably have to take it for the rest of your life. You may be taking other medications along with Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) to prevent rejection, such as prednisone, mycophenolate or sirolimus.

How should it be taken?

Advagraf® brand of tacrolimus is an extended release capsule specially designed to be taken only **once a day**. It works best if taken in the morning, and at the same time every day. You may take it either with or without food, as long as you take it the same way every day. In the hospital, you will take Advagraf® at 8AM. When you go home, you may take it at whatever time is most convenient for you as long as it is at the same time **every morning**. Do not open, cut, crush, or chew the capsule.

Advagraf® should not be confused with Prograf® brand of tacrolimus. They cannot be interchanged. If your medication looks different than what you have been taking, talk to your pharmacist or transplant doctor.

DO NOT take Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) with grapefruit or grapefruit juice. This may cause the amount of Advagraf® in your blood to increase. Orange juice has no effect and is safe to drink.

Dose changes

For the first few months after your transplant, your dose of Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) will change often. Dose changes are based on the amount of Advagraf® in your blood. The dose will vary among different people. Your transplant doctor will tell you what dose you should take. Take this medication exactly the way you are told by your transplant team.

When you leave the hospital, you will continue to have your Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) blood level checked periodically. When you come to the clinic for blood tests, **DO NOT** take your Advagraf® dose that morning. Bring it with you and **take if after** your blood is drawn. Your doctor will tell you if you need to change your dose (for the next day) after he has seen the results of your blood test.

If you miss a dose

Take it as soon as you remember, as long as it is within 14 hours of your usual time. For example, if you take Advagraf® at 8AM and you forget, you need to take it by 10PM. If you remember more than 14 hours later, skip the missed dose and carry on the next day as usual. NEVER double the dose. It is important to remember to take this medication regularly and on time so that it can work most effectively for you. Missing too many doses can lead to rejection.

If you are sick

If you vomit within ½ hour of taking Advagraf®, you should take it again. If you vomit more than ½ hour after taking your dose, it is not necessary to take another dose. If you have diarrhea for several days or continue to vomit, you should contact your transplant team. They may want to check your Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) blood level.

How should Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) be stored?

Keep your medications away from extremes of temperature (very hot or very cold). Keep them at room temperature, away from children. Do not keep medication in your vehicle. When you travel, take your medication in a carry-on bag and keep it with you at all times.

What are the side effects?

Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) can cause nausea, stomach discomfort, diarrhea, constipation, headache, tremors, difficulty sleeping, flushing, or tingling in your hands and feet. Some people may also develop high blood pressure or slowing of kidney function. All anti-rejection medications can increase your risk for infections and certain types of cancers, especially skin cancer. You should report anything unusual to your transplant team.

Many of these side effects can also occur when your blood levels of Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) are too high, which is why it is important for your transplant team to continue to monitor your blood levels.

Some people may also develop high blood sugar or diabetes and require medications or insulin to treat this.

Other information

Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) is a very specialized medication and may not be readily available at your pharmacy. Be sure you always have enough on hand so you never run out.

Drug interactions

Many prescription and non-prescription medications can interact (not mix well) with Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) and affect the way it works in your body. It is important to check with your doctor or pharmacist before you take any new medications, even products you buy off the shelf, to make sure it will not affect the amount Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) in your blood or cause added side effects.

It is also recommended that you avoid herbal or homeopathic medications, as these may also affect how Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) works in your body.

Drugs used to treat high cholesterol or triglycerides may become more potent when taken with Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER). You should always check with your transplant team before taking these types of medications (e.g., atorvastatin, simvastatin, pravastatin, lovastatin, rosuvastatin, fenofibrate, etc.).

You should also check with your transplant team before having any vaccinations.

Some examples of medications that do not mix well with Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) are listed below. This is not a complete list, so you should always check with your transplant team or pharmacist before taking any new medications not prescribed by your transplant team.

Medicines that may increase Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) blood levels:

- diltiazem
- verapamil
- fluconazole/ketoconazole/itraconazole/voriconazole
- erythromycin/clarithromycin (azithromycin is safe)
- estrogen
- birth control pills
- magnesium containing medications (e.g. Milk of Magnesia, Maalox)
- grapefruit/grapefruit juice

Medicines that may decrease Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) blood levels:

- phenytoin
- phenobarbital
- carbamazepine
- rifampin
- St. John's Wort

Drugs that may cause additive harm to kidneys:

- Aspirin (unless prescribed by your doctor)
- Ibuprofen and other anti-inflammatory medications