

Cyclophosphamide

Other names for this medication

- Cytosan[®]

How this medication works

Cyclophosphamide is a medication that acts on the immune system to decrease inflammation. It is used in children who have diseases like lupus and vasculitis.

Cyclophosphamide starts to work in 6 to 12 weeks, but it may take longer to see the full benefits of this medication.

How to take this medication

Cyclophosphamide is usually given to children by an intravenous (IV) infusion every 4 weeks. Although it is rarely used in children, cyclophosphamide can be taken as a pill once a day.

While taking this medication you may notice

Some possible side effects include:

- Nausea, vomiting, stomach pain for up to 24 hours after the dose
- Feeling unwell for up to 24 hours after the dose
- Low white blood cell counts
- Serious unusual infections
- Mouth sores
- Thinning hair, hair loss
- Skin rash
- Bladder irritation
- Decreased fertility (reversible when the medication stops)
- Small increased risk of cancers of the skin, blood cells or bladder

Although these side effects are possible, they rarely occur

What to remember while taking this medication

Cyclophosphamide may make it harder for your body to fight infections. Call your doctor if you have a fever, if you think you have an infection or if you are given antibiotics to treat an infection. Your next dose of cyclophosphamide may need to be delayed if you have an infection.

Children taking cyclophosphamide may also take an antibiotic called cotrimoxazole (also known as trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, Septra[®], Sulfatrim[®], or Bactrim[®]). This antibiotic is used to prevent serious or unusual infections. It is usually taken as a pill 3 times a week. Your doctor will explain how to take cotrimoxazole.

You will need regular blood tests to check your white blood cell counts while taking this medication. Usually, blood tests are done on the day of your IV infusion and then 7, 10 and 14 days after the infusion.

Cyclophosphamide may harm an unborn child if it is taken during pregnancy and is not considered safe while breastfeeding. It is important not to get pregnant or breastfeed while taking this medication.

Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting a new medication.

What to do on the day of your cyclophosphamide infusion

- Drink plenty of fluids on the day of the infusion. Start drinking fluids before coming to the hospital. Continue to drink lots of fluids during the infusion and after you go home, until bedtime. You do not need to get up at night to drink more.
- Go to the bathroom to pee regularly.
- For the next 48 hours, take extra care to wash your hands well with soap and water after going to the bathroom.