

# Sirolimus

Names	The generic drug name is sirolimus (sir oh' li mus). The brand name is Rapamune®. There may be other names for this medication.
What is sirolimus?	Sirolimus is an immunosuppressant used to decrease the immune system's response to a transplanted organ.
How is sirolimus taken?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sirolimus comes as a tablet and as a solution (liquid), both taken by mouth, usually once a day.</li><li>• Take your dose the same way every time – always with food or always without food.</li><li>• Swallow the tablets whole; do not split, chew, or crush them.</li><li>• To help you remember to take your medication, take it around the same time every day.</li><li>• Follow the directions on your prescription label carefully. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand.</li><li>• Doses are patient-specific. We may check the level of this drug in your blood to make sure you're on the best dose (for you). We may adjust your dose, depending on the results of the blood test.</li><li>• Do not take more or less sirolimus or take it more often than prescribed by your doctor.</li><li>• Do not stop taking sirolimus without talking to your doctor. Continue to take it even if you feel well.</li><li>• Sirolimus solution may develop a haze when refrigerated. If this happens, let the bottle stand at room temperature and gently shake it until the haze goes away. The haze does not mean that the medication is damaged or unsafe to use.</li></ul>
What should I tell my doctor before I begin sirolimus?	<p>Tell your doctor if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are allergic to sirolimus or have any other allergies</li><li>• are taking herbal products, especially St. John's wort</li><li>• have or have ever had high cholesterol, high triglycerides, or liver disease</li><li>• if you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding</li></ul>

Side effects – what can I expect?

Important things to remember about side effects:

- Side effects are usually temporary and go away after treatment ends.
- Most people do not have all of the side effects listed for a medication.
- In many cases, we know when a side effect is likely to begin and how long it will last. We can often prescribe medications to lessen the severity of side effects.
- Having side effects, or their severity, has no relationship to how well your medication is working.
- Treatment is given because we feel the benefits are greater than the side effects the drug may cause

Common side effects

- **Fluid retention (edema)**
- **Headache, dizziness**
- **Skin rash, acne**
- **Increased risk of infection**
- **Decreased kidney function**
- **Constipation, diarrhea, nausea**
- **Elevated cholesterol**

How can I manage the side effects?

- ✓ **Drink 2-3 quarts of water every day unless your doctor tells you to limit your fluids.** This will help flush the medications out and help prevent dehydration and constipation. Try to drink a variety of fluids to help provide the calories, sodium (salt), and other electrolytes your body needs.
- ✓ **Edema:** To help prevent edema, do not stand for long periods of time. Keep your legs elevated when sitting or lying down. Avoid wearing tight-fitting clothing and shoes. Weigh yourself often. Contact your provider if the swelling becomes painful, limits your ability to walk or care for yourself, or if you gain more than 5 pounds in 1 week.
- ✓ **Headaches:** Check with your doctor before taking any medication or product for this or any other side effect.
- ✓ **Skin care:** You may be more sensitive to sunlight, take extra care to avoid sun exposure. Use a sunblock with SPF 30 or higher that protects against both UVA and UVB rays when you are outdoors, even if it is just for a short time. Wear sunglasses and protective clothes (brimmed hat, long sleeves, etc.) when in the sun. Do not use tanning beds. If you develop a rash, keep it clean and dry. Check with your doctor before using creams/ointments.
- ✓ **Increased risk of infection:** Stay away from people with colds or other infections. Wash your hands often with soap and water. Talk to your doctor before you have any vaccinations, such as flu shot.

How can I manage the side effects?  
(cont.)

- ✓ **Constipation:** To help prevent constipation, add high fiber foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to your diet and, if possible, keep moving throughout the day. If you do not move your bowels in 2-3 days, you will need to take a laxative such as Senna-S, which is available over the counter. If not better in 2 days, call the clinic.
- ✓ **Diarrhea:** Loperamide (Imodium®) is available over the counter. You can take 2 tablets after the first episode of diarrhea, followed by 1 tablet (2mg) after each loose stool as needed. Do not take more than 8 tablets (16mg) in a 24-hour period. Call the clinic if not better within 24 hours.
- ✓ **Nausea:** To help prevent nausea, avoid fried, spicy, and fatty foods. Eating small, frequent meals may help. If you have nausea, try foods and drinks that are bland - ginger ale, dry crackers, and toast.
- ✓ **Mouth care** is very important. To prevent mouth sores, rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ teaspoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of water after every meal and at bedtime. Brush your teeth and gums often with a soft toothbrush. Do not use alcohol, mouthwashes that contain alcohol, or tobacco products. Call us if you have difficulty swallowing.

What else should I know about this medication?

- Avoid drinking grapefruit juice while taking this medication.
- If you are taking cyclosporine (Neoral) soft gelatin capsules or solution, take them 4 hours before sirolimus.
- If you are having surgery, including dental surgery, tell the doctor or dentist that you are taking sirolimus.
- Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children. Store tablets at room temperature and away from light, excess heat, and moisture (not in the bathroom).
- Do not get pregnant or father a child. Both men and women should use an effective method of birth control before starting to take sirolimus, while taking sirolimus, and for 12 weeks after stopping sirolimus. Barrier methods, such as condoms and diaphragms, are recommended. This drug may cause harm to a fetus.

When should I call the doctor?

**Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if you have life-threatening symptoms such as:**

- signs of severe allergic reaction: Swelling or tingling in your face, tongue, mouth, or throat; chest tightness; wheezing; trouble breathing or swallowing; dizziness, shortness of breath; heart palpitations; or hives.

Please let us know if you go to the emergency room or are admitted to the hospital.

When should I call  
the doctor?  
(cont.)

Call your doctor immediately if you have:

- **signs of infection:** Fever of 100.4°F (38°C), sore throat, chills, frequent or painful urination
- **new sores or changes on the skin**
- **night sweats**
- **swollen glands in the neck, armpits, or groin**
- **unexplained weight loss**
- **weakness or tiredness that does not go away**
- **pain, swelling, or fullness in the stomach**

#### **Roswell Patients**

- Clinics are open Monday to Friday, 8:00a.m. – 5p.m.
- After hours, you can reach Roswell Park 24/7 at **716-845-2300** or toll free at **1-800-ROSWELL (1-800-767-9355)**.
- If it is determined you need to be seen, you may be asked to come to our Assessment & Treatment Center (ATC), which is open 24/7. You need to be referred to the ATC by your Roswell Park provider (or the provider on-call); it is not a walk-in clinic.