Cyclosporine

Neoral®, Sandimmune® and Gengraf® are other names for this medication.

How Is This Medication Useful?

- Cyclosporine is used to slow overactive immune systems. It is used to prevent rejection of transplanted organs, to treat skin and blood conditions that are caused by over active immune systems, and to treat dry eye in dogs. It is also very useful in allowing healing of cracks around the anus (anal fistulas) that do not respond to other treatments.

Are There Conditions or Times When Its Use Might Cause More Harm Than Good?

- Cyclosporine should be used carefully in patients with liver or kidney disease.
- Cyclosporine may keep vaccines from working properly. Your pet should not receive vaccines with live virus while on cyclosporine.
- Cyclosporine causes birth defects and death to the fetus in many animals. It should not be used in pregnancy. Pregnant caregivers should avoid contact with this drug.
- Cyclosporine affects or is affected by many other drugs. You should tell your veterinarian about any drugs that your pet is taking.
- If your animal has any of the above conditions, talk to your veterinarian about the potential risks of using the medication versus its potential benefits.

What Side Effects Can Be Seen With Its Use?

- In dogs, vomiting, diarrhea, and loss of appetite are the most common side effects.
- Cats will lose their appetites when receiving higher doses of cyclosporine.
- Some cats will have increased hair growth while on cyclosporine.
- Cyclosporine can cause overgrowth of the gums.
- Since cyclosporine decreases the power of the immune system, your pet is more susceptible to infection. Watch your pet for signs of infection such as fever (103°-104°F in dogs and cats), tiredness or sneezing, coughing or runny eyes.
- Most animals do not like the taste of cyclosporine and giving gel capsules or flavoring the liquid is recommended.
- In humans, the risk of cancer is sometimes higher in patients who have taken the drug for a long time.

How Should It Be Given?

- Cyclosporine must be given orally on an empty stomach. Animals that vomit cyclosporine may need to have the drug given with food.
- Cyclosporine is very expensive. If your pet needs a high dose of it, the veterinarian may prescribe another drug (erythromycin or ketoconazole) that slows down the removal of cyclosporine from the body. This will allow you to give a lower, and therefore less expensive, dose.
- There are two different kinds of oral liquids of cyclosporine: the microemulsion (Neoral®) and the regular liquid (Sandimmune®). The microemulsion is much stronger and these liquids should not be substituted for each other. Cyclosporine is also inactivated by some kinds of plastics. You should not leave the drug in plastic cups or syringes for long periods of time or it may not work.
- The successful outcome of your animal’s treatment with this medication depends upon your commitment and ability to administer it exactly as the veterinarian has prescribed. Please do not skip doses or stop giving the medication. If you have difficulty giving doses consult your veterinarian or pharmacist who can offer administration techniques or change the dosage form to a type of medication that may be more acceptable to you and your animal.
- If you miss a dose of this medication you should give it as soon as you remember it, but if it is within a few hours of the regularly scheduled dose, wait and give it at the regular time. Do not double a dose as this can be toxic to your pet.
- Some other drugs can interact with this medication so tell your veterinarian about any drugs or foods that you currently give your animal. Do not give new foods or medications without first asking your veterinarian.
- Dogs and Cats: Dogs and cats usually receive cyclosporine orally once or twice daily on an empty stomach. Food may be given to decrease vomiting if it occurs.
- Horses: Horses do not usually receive cyclosporine orally but may receive it as a surgical implant in the eye for certain eye diseases.

What Other Information Is Important About This Medication?

- Cyclosporine should be stored in a tight, light resistant, childproof container away from all children and other household pets.
- You should throw away all open bottles of cyclosporine after they have been opened for 2 months as exposure to air slowly destroys the drug.
- Cyclosporine is an expensive drug therapy. It must also be very carefully monitored so your veterinarian will want you to bring your pet back into the office for very important blood checks to make sure that the drug is not becoming toxic. Be sure to bring your pet back for these very important visits.