



# London Health Sciences Centre

## Multi-Organ Transplant Program

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

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**Brand Name:** Advagraf®  
**Common Name:** tacrolimus extended release (ER)

### What is it?

Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) is a very potent immunosuppressive drug, which helps prevent your body 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® 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 (every 24 hours)**. It is best 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® 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® 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® 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 seeing 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® blood level.

### **How should Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) be stored?**

Keep your medications away from temperature extremes (very hot or very cold). It is best to store 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® can cause nausea, stomach discomfort, diarrhea, constipation, headache, tremors, difficulty sleeping, flushing, or tingling in your hands and feet. Some people may develop high blood pressure or slowing of kidney function; others may develop high blood sugar or diabetes and require medications or insulin to treat this. 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® are too high, which is why it is important for your transplant team to continue to monitor your blood levels.

### **Other information**

Advagraf® 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®, affecting 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 they will not affect the amount of Advagraf® in your blood or cause more side effects. You should avoid herbal or homeopathic medications, as these may also affect how Advagraf® works in your body.

Drugs used to treat high cholesterol or triglycerides may become more potent when taken with Advagraf®. 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® are listed below. This is not a complete list, so you should always check with your transplant team or a pharmacist before taking any new medications not prescribed by your transplant team.

May increase Advagraf®	May decrease Advagraf®	May increase harm to kidneys
-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	-phenytoin -phenobarbital -carbamazepine -rifampin -St. John's Wort	-Aspirin (unless prescribed by your doctor) -Ibuprofen and other anti- inflammatory medications