

**Brand Name:** Advagraf®

**Common Name:** 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 may be taking other medications along with Advagraf® (tacrolimus ER) to prevent rejection, such as prednisone, mycophenolate and/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® (tacrolimus ER) 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®, the extended release tacrolimus, should not be confused with Prograf®, the regular release 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, grapefruit juice or pomegranates. 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® may 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 your transplant team tells you to.

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 it 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. If it is beyond the 14-hour mark, skip the missed dose and take your next dose as scheduled. 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 30 minutes of taking Advagraf®, you should take it again. If you vomit more than 30 minutes 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® 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?**

- Nausea
- Stomach discomfort
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Headache
- Tremors
- Difficulty sleeping
- Flushing or tingling in hands and feet
- High blood pressure
- Slowing of kidney function
- High blood sugar or diabetes (may require insulin to treat this)

All anti-rejection medications can increase your risk for:

- Infections
- Certain types of cancers, especially skin cancer

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.

**Drug interactions**

Many prescription and non-prescription medications can interact (not mix well) with Advagraf® 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® 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® 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 pharmacist before taking any new medications not prescribed by your transplant team.

May increase Advagraf® levels	May decrease Advagraf® levels	May increase harm to kidneys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diltiazem</li> <li>• Verapamil</li> <li>• Amiodarone</li> <li>• Fluconazole/ ketoconazole/ itraconazole/ voriconazole</li> <li>• Erythromycin/ clarithromycin (azithromycin is safe)</li> <li>• Estrogen</li> <li>• Birth control pills</li> <li>• Grapefruit/ grapefruit juice/pomegranates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phenytoin</li> <li>• Phenobarbital</li> <li>• Carbamazepine</li> <li>• Rifampin</li> <li>• St. John’s wort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspirin (unless prescribed by your doctor)</li> <li>• Ibuprofen and other anti-inflammatory medications</li> </ul>

**Other information**

Advagraf® is a very specialized medication and may not be readily available at your pharmacy. It is recommended you have at least a 2 week supply at all times.

