

PHARMACY

Drug Information

Tofacitinib



What is Tofacitinib?

- Tofacitinib is an immunosuppressant which helps to reduce inflammation by inhibiting the enzymes in the Janus Kinase (JAK) pathway, thereby improving symptoms of joint pain and swelling.
- It is used in the treatment of autoimmune diseases such as moderate to severe Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), psoriatic arthritis and ulcerative colitis.
- When used in RA, Tofacitinib may be used alone or with other disease modifying medication e.g. Methotrexate.

How is Tofacitinib Taken?

- Tofacitinib tablets may be taken orally, with or without food.
- Dosage of Tofacitinib will depend on the disease condition treated, existing liver or kidney disease, and existing medications.
- It is important that you take your medication regularly even if you do not notice any benefit. Tofacitinib does not work immediately and it may take weeks to months before you notice any benefit.
- If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, take only the usual dose. Do not double the dosage.

Can Tofacitinib be Taken With Other Medications?

- Tofacitinib can be taken with other medications such as Corticosteroids, Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) and other disease modifying agents.
- Please inform your doctor, pharmacist or rheumatology nurse clinician if you are taking other medications including over-the-counter medicines, supplements or traditional/herbal remedies as they may interact with Tofacitinib. Examples of medications which can interact with Tofacitinib include anti-fungal medications (e.g. Ketoconazole, Fluconazole) and Rifampicin.
- Discuss with your doctor before receiving any vaccines. Pneumococcal and influenza (flu) vaccinations are safe and may be given if required. Avoid live vaccines such as MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella), OPV (Oral Polio Vaccine), yellow fever or BCG (Tuberculosis).

What are the Important Side Effects of Tofacitinib?

- Some side effects of Tofacitinib may be present only after years of taking this medication. Always discuss with your doctor if you experience any side effects.

Side Effect	Management
Headache, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting (common side effects)	Some of these may improve as you get used to the medication. Taking the medication after food may reduce nausea. Consult your doctor if these are bothersome.
Infection (Warning signs: fever more than 38°C, chills, cough, painful urination, blood in urine, lethargy)	Seek medical attention immediately. The doctor whom you consult should be informed that you are taking Tofacitinib as the medication may need to be stop while you are having an infection.
Increase in blood pressure and cholesterol	Check your blood pressure regularly. Your doctor will do blood test to monitor your cholesterol level. Your doctor may prescribe new medication, or adjust your existing medications to control your blood pressure and cholesterol.
Liver disorder (rare side effect) (Warning signs: Yellowing of eye whites or skin, dark or tea-coloured urine or constant abdominal pain)	Consult your doctor immediately. Your doctor will do blood tests to check if this occurs.
Bowel problems (e.g. inflammation of colon, gastrointestinal perforation)	Consult your doctor immediately if you experience persistent abdominal pain or bloody stools. Inform your doctor if you have a history of diverticulitis.

Side Effect	Management
Blood disorder (e.g. anemia, lymphopenia, neutropenia)	It is important to monitor the effects of your new treatment, particularly during the first three months of treatment. Your doctor will order regular blood tests for monitoring.

If you develop rashes, facial swelling or shortness of breath after taking the medication, you could be allergic to the medication. Please seek medical attention immediately.

Are There any Special Precautions That I Need to Take?

- Tofacitinib may reduce your body's ability to fight against infection.
- Avoid crowded places and direct contact with any sick person while on Tofacitinib.
- Avoid consumption of raw or undercooked food.
- See a doctor immediately if you develop a fever or feel unwell. The doctor whom you consult should be informed that you are on Tofacitinib.
- It is important to inform your doctor if you intend to conceive or breastfeed while taking this medication. Tofacitinib may affect women's ability to conceive and it is currently unknown if this effect is reversible.
- Women of childbearing potential should use reliable contraceptive measures while on Tofacitinib and for at least four weeks after stopping the treatment.
- Breastfeeding is not recommended while on Tofacitinib to avoid undesirable side effects on infant. It is unknown whether the medication is excreted into the breast milk.

How do I Store Tofacitinib?

- Store your medication in a cool, dry place away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight.

If you have any problem with your treatment, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or rheumatology nurse clinician.

Please keep all medications out of reach of children.

