

Methotrexate patient information leaflet

Methotrexate doses are ONCE EACH WEEK.

You will need regular blood tests while you are taking methotrexate.

Methotrexate is used to treat conditions where some kind of over-activity in the body is causing problems.

Methotrexate prevents this over-activity.

It is thought that rheumatoid arthritis is caused by excessive activity of the immune system; methotrexate may work by suppressing this excessive activity and so reducing inflammation.

In psoriasis, methotrexate prevents the excessive division and multiplication of skin cells that causes skin scaling and raised plaques.

How to take methotrexate

Before beginning treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet.

Take methotrexate exactly as directed by your doctor.

If you are unsure why you are taking it, what dose to take, or which day of the week to take it, ask your doctor.

Doses of methotrexate are taken once a week. Make sure that you take each dose on the correct day of the week and at the correct time. Do not take methotrexate every day.

You will only be prescribed the 2.5mg tablets of methotrexate. If your tablets look different to usual check with the pharmacist.

Make sure you take the correct number of tablets each time you take a dose.

Handle the tablets as little as possible.

You should take folic acid tablets while you are being treated with methotrexate. This is to help reduce unwanted side-effects. The hospital will tell you which days to take it, but it is usually the day after your methotrexate tablets. Sometimes you may need to take the folic acid more than once a week.

Getting the most from your treatment

Keep your regular appointments with your doctor so that your progress can be monitored. You will need to have regular blood tests while you are taking methotrexate.

Do not take medicines containing aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or vitamin preparations containing folic acid, without first consulting your doctor. Some medicines that can be bought over the counter may contain these. Check with your pharmacist if you are unsure about the contents of any medicine.

It is important that you do not become pregnant or father a child while you are taking methotrexate, and for at least 3 months afterwards. Ask your doctor for contraceptive advice.

Any unwanted tablets must be disposed off in a special way. If you need to dispose of methotrexate, ask your local pharmacy for advice.

While you are taking methotrexate, and for a while after you stop treatment, do not have any immunisations (vaccinations) without talking to your doctor first.

Methotrexate lowers the body's resistance and there is a chance that you may get an infection from some vaccines.

If you are having any treatment like an operation or dental treatment tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are taking.

If you are given antibiotics for an infection omit your dose of methotrexate that week.

Can methotrexate cause problems ?

Your doctor will have discussed with you the possibility of unwanted side-effects of treatment with methotrexate. Let your doctor know if you experience any of the following:

Common side-effects	What can I do if I experience this
Increased chance of infection	Try avoiding people with infections and let your doctor know straight away if you think you are getting a sore throat or if you have a high temperature
Feeling or being sick, diarrhoea any	Eat little and often. Stick to simple foods and drink plenty of water to replace lost fluids
Sore mouth	Brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush 2-3 times daily and use a mouth rinse frequently
Headache suitable painkiller	Ask your pharmacist or doctor to recommend a
Dizziness, tiredness, rash, loss of hair doctor	If any of these become troublesome, speak with your

Important: If you develop any of the following, let your doctor know straight away on the number below:

- Sore throat, unusual bruising, mouth ulcers
- Sickness, abdominal pain, dark urine
- Shortness of breath, cough

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to this medicine,

* Phone the surgery on **01332 667911** and ask to speak to a Doctor.

* If you are under the rheumatologists phone the rheumatology nurse advice line on **01332 787710**

* Call **111** service if out of hours/weekend