
Patient Information Leaflet

This leaflet answers some common questions about Methotrexate. It does not contain all the available information. It also does not take the place of talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

What is Methotrexate?

Methotrexate is a medication used in the treatment of Juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), inflammatory bowel diseases (including Crohn's disease), systemic lupus erythematosis (SLE) and other rheumatological conditions. It belongs to a class of drugs known as immunosuppressants or disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs).

Methotrexate works by interfering with folate metabolism, thus reducing the activity of immune system.

When should it be taken?

Methotrexate should be taken orally or injected at the same day of the week. It is advisable that you note down the day and timing of methotrexate administration on your calendar to avoid missing dose or overdosing.

How should it be taken?

To maximise the absorption of Methotrexate, it is best taken orally at night once or twice **WEEKLY** on empty stomach, i.e an hour before food or 2 hours after food. However, if you experience gastric discomfort whilst on Methotrexate, you may take it with food.

Do not stop taking Methotrexate unless you are told to do so by your doctor. Do not take more or less than required unless instructed.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is nearer to the time of your next dose, skip the missed dose. Do not take two doses at the same time.

Safe Handling

To minimise drug exposure to other members of the family, the following methods of administration are recommended:

1. Place tablets onto a spoon dedicated for use with Methotrexate and administer directly to the mouth. Avoid contact with fingers if possible and wash hands and the spoon thoroughly after taking Methotrexate.
2. **Pregnant or breastfeeding women** are advised to wear gloves as extra precaution where possible.
3. For patients who are unable to swallow tablets whole, it is advised to wet the tablets for a few minutes before grinding them to minimise the inhalation of medication powder.

What side effects can this medicine cause? What can I do about them?

You may experience the following side effects while on Methotrexate. Tell your doctor if you encounter any of them so that adjustments to your therapy may be made to reduce the occurrence of these side effects where possible. These include:

- Abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting
- Skin dryness, increased sensitivity to sun (Apply sunscreen when out in the sun)
- Mouth ulcers

Please inform your doctor if you experience any other side effects or if the side effects become severe and bothersome.

There are some potentially serious but rare side effects that may be experienced when you are using Methotrexate. These include:

- Breathing difficulties, persistent cough
- Bone marrow suppression, manifested as sore throats, mouth ulcers, unexplained bruising/bleeding, unusual tiredness, infection or persistent fever
- Yellowing of skins and/or dark-coloured urine
- Black tarry stools

Stop using Methotrexate and inform your doctor immediately if you experience any of the potentially serious side effects.

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Drugs or Food to avoid

Some medication or food may reduce its effectiveness or increase the side effects. Do not give your child or yourself any other medications or herbal products without consulting your doctor or pharmacist. These include:

1. Live vaccines, for e.g BCG, MMR and some forms of polio or influenza vaccines

Drugs commonly co-administered

1. Biologic agents such as Adalimumab, Etanercept or Infliximab
2. Folic acid (Usually taken on different days of the week)
3. Other DMARDs (e.g Hydroxychloroquine and/or Sulphasalazine)
4. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as Ibuprofen, Indomethacin or Naproxen
5. Corticosteroids (e.g Prednisolone)

Disclaimer: The list is not exhaustive, if in doubt, do inform your doctor or pharmacist especially if you are on any other medication or supplements when you are prescribed Methotrexate.

Storage

Store at room temperature and protect from light.

General Information

Compliance to follow up visits

While taking Methotrexate, you should be seeing your specialist doctor regularly to ensure that your treatment is optimized and to address any concerns relating to your treatment.

Regular laboratory tests may be conducted as directed by your doctor.

Supply of Drugs

You are advised not to purchase more Methotrexate than required before your next visit in case of dose changes or stoppage of medication.

Proper Disposal

You are advised to bring Methotrexate to the pharmacy for proper disposal if you are to stop the drug permanently.

Caregiver advice

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, extra precaution should be taken when handling Methotrexate as it may cause harm to the developing foetus or baby.

Do not give Methotrexate to anyone else. It has been prescribed for a specific condition, may not be the correct treatment for another person, and would be dangerous if the other person is pregnant.