

Methotrexate

Patient Information Leaflet

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This leaflet aims to answer your questions about taking Methotrexate to treat your autoimmune condition in which your immune system attacks your own body. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist caring for you.

What is Methotrexate and what is it used for?

Methotrexate is an immunosuppressant. It reduces the strength of your immune system to treat autoimmune conditions. These conditions can fluctuate between periods of remission (few or no symptoms) and flare-ups (worsening symptoms). Methotrexate helps to prevent flare-ups and helps to control or reduce symptoms. Further information can be found in the information leaflet supplied by the manufacturer or from your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

How to take your Methotrexate tablets

Methotrexate is taken **ONLY ONCE A WEEK** on the same day each week. The dose of Methotrexate usually starts at 5mg **ONCE A WEEK** increased gradually according to your response to the medication to achieve the most effective dose to treat your condition. It works slowly and can take up to several weeks to take full effect. If there is no improvement after a few months your doctor may consider stopping the medication.

IMPORTANT- Methotrexate tablets are available in 2.5mg and 10mg tablets. Always check the dose prescribed by your doctor and the strength of tablet with which you have been supplied.

The tablets should be taken soon after food (it may cause irritation if taken on an empty stomach). Swallow the tablets whole. Do not break, chew or crush the tablets.

Do not take Methotrexate if you

- are allergic to Methotrexate or any of its excipients
- are pregnant or breast feeding
- have significant kidney or liver problems
- have serious blood problems (severe anaemia or clotting problems)
- have an active infection.

What is Folic acid and why do I need to take it with Methotrexate?

You will be given Folic acid tablets to reduce the side effects of Methotrexate. Folic acid tablets should be taken once a day or once a week. Do not take your Folic acid tablets on the same day as your Methotrexate.

What to do if you forget to take the medicine

If you forget to take your Methotrexate take it when you remember. For example, if your usual dose is taken on a Monday, you can take it on Tuesday and this will become your new day of the week to take future doses. Never take two doses at any one time. Contact your doctor if you take more than your normal dose of Methotrexate.

Taking other medicines with Methotrexate

Methotrexate can interact with other medicines such as diclofenac and ibuprofen (Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents for pain and inflammation) and ciprofloxacin, trimethoprim and co-trimoxazole (antibiotics). It is important to tell your doctor other medicines you are taking, including over the counter medication or herbal remedies, before starting Methotrexate therapy.

Possible side effects

Most people don't have side effects and everyone reacts differently to medication. However, if you have any concerns about your symptoms contact your doctor or pharmacist.

Methotrexate may cause headaches, sickness, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, reversible hair loss and sensitivity to sunlight. These side effects usually improve as you become use to the medication.

The effect of Methotrexate on the blood is rare but it weakens your immune system therefore increases your risk of infection. If you develop any signs of blood disorders (sore throat, bruising, and mouth ulcers), liver problems (nausea, vomiting, abdominal discomfort, and dark urine) and respiratory effects (shortness of breath) contact your doctor or pharmacist immediately. Additionally, if you have not had chicken pox and come in close contact with anyone who has chicken pox or shingles contact your doctor.

Monitoring requirements when taking Methotrexate

Methotrexate can affect your blood cells, kidneys and your liver. Your doctor will periodically carry out blood tests to ensure your new medication is not causing you any problems. Initially in most cases, blood tests are carried out every two to four weeks then every two to three months after the first few months.

Vaccinations whilst taking Methotrexate

The use of 'live' vaccines should be avoided whilst on Methotrexate as there is an increased risk of infection.

How to get a further supply of Methotrexate

Contact your GP or your hospital specialist if you need more medication.

How to store Methotrexate tablets

Do not use after the expiry date stated on the label. Do not store above 25°C. Protect from light.

Useful sources of information

Neuromyelitis Optica UK Specialist Services NHS

<http://www.nmouk.nhs.uk/what-is-nmo/neuromyelitis-services>

Myasthenia gravis NHS

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/myasthenia-gravis/>

Sarcoidosis NHS

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sarcoidosis/>

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your medication, please contact Medicines Information on 020 8725 1579 (Monday to Friday, 9.15am to 9.35pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: NEU_MPIL_01 Published: December 2019 Review date: December 2021
