

Methotrexate (Matrex)

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

What do the tablets look like?

Methotrexate tablets are usually yellow, but the colour may vary depending on which brand your chemist is able to obtain. **The tablets should all be of 2.5mg strength – please check this.**

Why are you taking Methotrexate?

Methotrexate belongs to the group of medicine known as 'disease modifying' or 'second line agents' that are used to treat inflammatory joint disease.

As Methotrexate is not a pain reliever you will not notice an immediate benefit. It may take up to three months to notice an improvement in your symptoms. You will need to carry on taking your other medication as well.

Methotrexate requires careful monitoring to avoid toxicity. It should only be prescribed under hospital supervision.

How to take Methotrexate

Dosage

Week 1-2 – 15mg weekly for 2 weeks (6 x 2.5mg tablets)

Week 3-4 – 20mg weekly for 2 weeks (8 x 2.5mg tablets)

20mg weekly is your maintenance dose. You will take these doses under the guidance of Dr Stuart Kyle (consultant). This dose can be reduced or increased if necessary.

You will usually start as above **or** your consultant may prescribe an alternative dose which will be discussed with you. Choose a day that is best for you to take your treatment and keep to that routine. The dose may be increased depending on how your symptoms respond to the treatment. **You will be prescribed folic acid tablets. One tablet should be taken every day except on the day you take Methotrexate.**

What to do if you miss a dose

If you forget to take your medication, **do not** double your next dose but make a note of it and remember to tell your GP at your next appointment. If you forget on your regular Methotrexate day, it is fine to take your Methotrexate tablets a day or two later, but if more than 2 days late, leave off until your next due dose.

Can you take other medicines and alcohol?

Alcohol can interact with Methotrexate and irritate your liver. Therefore alcohol should be consumed in moderation. Please discuss this with the rheumatology team.

Methotrexate interacts with a number of other medicines. Always tell your GP you are taking Methotrexate before any other medicines are prescribed for you, especially the following:

- Probenecid
- Trimethoprim
- Co-trimoxazole (brand name Septrin, Bactrim)

You should not take any additional medicines without checking first with your GP.

You should avoid buying medicines over the counter as Methotrexate interacts with a number of other medications, but if you do so please tell the pharmacist you are taking Methotrexate. **Your GP may prescribe aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or you may already be taking them. These may interact with Methotrexate, though it is unlikely to cause a problem at the doses prescribed for you.**

Paracetamol, coproxamol or codeine can be taken with Methotrexate.

Live vaccines should not be used with Methotrexate. If you need a vaccination, it is important that you check with your GP first.

Contraception and pregnancy

Treatment with Methotrexate has the potential to affect fertility of men and women. It is advised that you should not be taking Methotrexate before conception or for at least three months after treatment. Treatment with Methotrexate has the potential to affect the development of the unborn child, and men and women of childbearing age should use a reliable method of contraception to avoid the risk of an unplanned pregnancy during treatment. When planning a pregnancy, it is important that both men and women on this drug discuss medication with the rheumatology team. This should be at least three months before conception.

Blood monitoring

Your GP will arrange for you to have regular blood tests; fortnightly for 6 weeks, monthly for 3 months and then every 3 months thereafter. These are guidelines from the British Society of Rheumatology but your GP may need to change these depending on your results.

Special precautions

Having an autoimmune condition could reduce your resistance to infection. We strongly advise the annual flu vaccine and the 10 yearly pneumonia vaccine.

All infections should be treated promptly. If you are aware of an infection, arrange to see your GP.

Possible side-effects

- **Nausea, upset stomach**
Take the tablets with or after food, if possible in the evening, to reduce any stomach upset. Drink plenty of water with the tablets. The feeling of sickness usually goes away after a time as your body gets used to the treatment. If the sickness is severe, consult your GP.
- **Mouth ulcers, sore throat or mouth**
- **Rash, itching anywhere on the body**
- **Effects on the bone marrow or the liver**
Regular blood tests are carried out to monitor for this.
- **Inflammation of the lung tissue**
A chest x-ray is taken before starting treatment. If you find yourself becoming increasingly breathless, report it to your GP immediately.
- **Thinning hair**
- **Reduced resistance to infection**
You should avoid close contact with people who have infections such as chickenpox. If you know you have been in close contact with somebody with chickenpox, contact your GP for advice.

Please stay up to date with an annual flu vaccine and a ten-yearly pneumovax.

If you have noticed any side-effects, tell the doctor or nurse promptly.

Further information

If you need more information, or have any problems or have any queries about your medication, please contact your GP or ring:

Rheumatology Advice Line: 01271 322359

This leaflet is intended for use by Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (Northern services) staff for procedures undertaken at its hospitals. The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if this leaflet is used by those other than our staff undertaking procedures at its hospitals.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple
Devon EX31 4JB
Tel. 01271 322577
www.royaldevon.nhs.uk

© Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
This leaflet was designed by the Communications Department.
Email: ndht.contactus@nhs.net