

## Does Methotrexate affect fertility or pregnancy?

Methotrexate may cause serious birth defects. Do not take Methotrexate if you are trying to conceive, during pregnancy or when breastfeeding. It is necessary for men and women to use contraception while on Methotrexate and at least three months after stopping Methotrexate. Do not take Methotrexate unless you are on reliable contraception. You are advised to consult your doctor if you are planning to conceive.

## Can I have immunisations while on Methotrexate?

Pneumococcal, influenza, hepatitis A and B, tetanus vaccinations are allowed. Avoid immunisations with live vaccines such as polio, varicella (chicken pox), measles, mumps and rubella (MMR).

## Are there any alternatives to Methotrexate?

A number of medications are available to treat certain diseases. Your doctor will advise you on the safest and most effective option. If you have any concerns, do raise them with your doctor.

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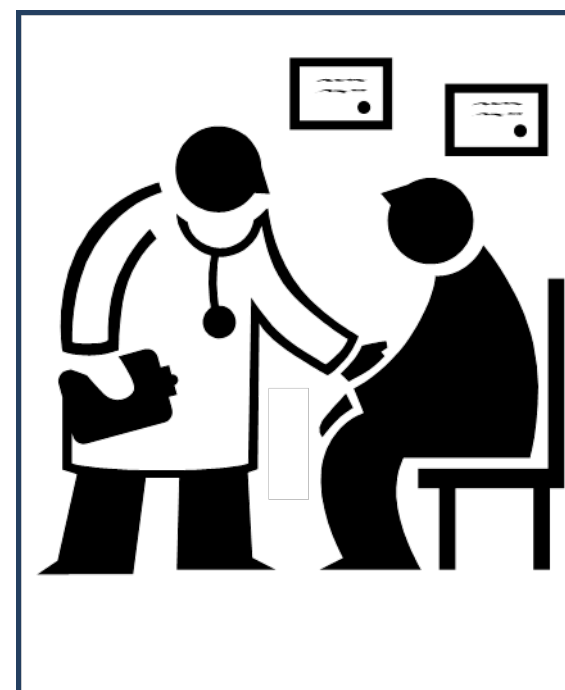
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## Medication Information for Patients

### METHOTREXATE\*\*



\*\* The information in this brochure may not be applicable to patients under the care of Haematology/Oncology unless specified by the attending doctor.

## Why am I being prescribed Methotrexate?

Methotrexate is used to treat several diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, inflammatory bowel disease and diseases which cause inflammation within the immune system (the body's defence system). Methotrexate works by modifying the immune system, so it should be used with care.

## When do I take Methotrexate?

Methotrexate is taken **ONCE A WEEK on the same day, anytime of the day**. It can be taken with or after food. Swallow tablets whole. Do not crush or chew.

Methotrexate may also be given once a week by subcutaneous injection (an injection under the skin, like insulin injections for diabetes), which can be considered for patients who are unable to tolerate the side effects of oral Methotrexate, such as nausea or vomiting.

## What dose do I take?

Methotrexate is available in **2.5mg oral tablets** and **50mg injection vials**. Usually, you will start at a low dose and the dose will be gradually increased if necessary. You may be prescribed folic acid (a type of vitamin) to be taken one day after Methotrexate to reduce its side effects. Taking Methotrexate and folic acid at the same time may reduce the beneficial effects of Methotrexate.

## When does Methotrexate work?

The effects of Methotrexate will not be visible immediately. It may take three to 12 weeks before you notice any benefit, provided you take your medication as prescribed.

## Do I have to do any blood tests while taking Methotrexate?

Methotrexate may occasionally lower blood counts and cause liver inflammation. However, these are usually reversible if detected early. **It is not safe to continue Methotrexate if you do not come for regular blood checks.**

## Should I avoid any medication while on Methotrexate?

Generally, you should show your doctor or pharmacist all other medications you are taking or plan to take, including supplements, antibiotics and over-the-counter medications.

## May I drink alcohol while taking Methotrexate?

Alcohol should be totally avoided while on Methotrexate, as the combination may increase the risk of liver problems.

## What if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose or forget to take your medicine, take it as soon as you remember. Adjust the timing of your next dose to be one week from the current dose. **Do not double the next dose to make up for the missed dose.**

## What are the possible risks associated with Methotrexate?

Side effects	Warning signs	Things you need to do
Mouth ulcers		Take folic acid as prescribed. If ulcers persist, inform your doctor.
Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea		Take folic acid as prescribed. Your doctor may adjust the dose of methotrexate
Rash		Rare. If present, inform your doctor.
Hair loss		Often transient, generally recovers when dose is reduced
Low blood count	Easy bruising, severe sore throat, tiredness, paleness	Do regular blood counts
Liver inflammation	Yellow eyes, tea coloured urine, constant abdominal pain	Inform your doctor about any history of liver disease. Do regular liver function tests
Risk of infection – fever, flu or sore throat		Avoid close contact with people with coughs/cold. <b>Discuss planned vaccinations with your doctor</b>
Small risk of hardening of the lungs	Breathlessness or persistent dry cough	If you experience breathlessness, please go to the Emergency Department.

Please seek medical attention if you experience any of the above symptoms.

## How should I store Methotrexate?

Both the tablets and the injection form should be stored at room temperature, away from light. Keep out of reach from children.