

Treatment Information

Methotrexate Tablets

The tablets

Methotrexate tablets come in two strengths, 2.5mg and 10mg.

DO NOT EVER TAKE 10mg TABLETS as these tablets are similar in appearance and this can lead to confusion in the amount of methotrexate you take.

How does it work?

Methotrexate is an immunosuppressant drug. This means that it dampens down the biological process, which damages your joints. It is not just a painkiller.

How do I take Methotrexate?

It is important to remember that Methotrexate tablets are taken **once a week**. It will help you to remember when to take them if you choose one special day of the week and take them on the same day each week. If you forget to take the tablets on your usual day, take them on the following day. The tablets should be swallowed whole not crushed or chewed, and taken after food. You will be given a folic acid tablet to take once a week, 5 days after the methotrexate, sometimes this is increased to 6 days a week.

How Long Will It Take To Work?

It may be several weeks before you notice any improvement. You should continue taking your other medicines as advised.

Are There Any Side Effects?

As with all medication some people may experience side effects. The most common side effects are:

Nausea	Vomiting	Loose bowel motions
Skin rash	Sore mouth	Shortness of breath
Sore throat	Mouth ulcers	Dry cough
Colic	Hair thinning	

Methotrexate can occasionally affect the blood and the way your liver works. If you experience side-effects please contact the Rheumatology Help-line or let your Rheumatology Practitioner know at your next appointment.

What Tests Will I Have?

A chest x-ray will be taken before you start the tablets. You will need to have blood tests regularly, at least monthly whilst taking methotrexate.

Additional Precautions

1. **Pregnancy:** Methotrexate can reduce fertility and is likely to harm an unborn baby, therefore methotrexate must not be taken during pregnancy. Both men and women should take contraceptive precautions whilst taking methotrexate and for 3 months after methotrexate is stopped. If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant (or father a child if you are a man) or breast feeding, you should inform your rheumatology doctor first and discuss your treatment.

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2. Vaccinations: You should consult your doctor before having any vaccinations. You should not have live vaccine and should take care if you have contact with young children who have had polio vaccine recently

3. Other medications: Co-trimoxazole (Septrin) and Trimethoprim are antibiotics, which may cause severe reactions and should not be taken whilst you are on Methotrexate. You should avoid taking aspirin or over-the-counter anti-inflammatory tablets. Before buying any medication over the counter always ask the pharmacist for advice.

4. Infection: You should see your doctor if you develop any signs of infection, sore throat or if you have a fever. If you have not had chicken pox but come into contact with chicken pox or shingles whilst you are taking methotrexate you should see your doctor immediately in case you need special treatment.

5. Alcohol: This can interact with methotrexate, please keep well within the recommended units – no more than 10 units per week.

Methotrexate Memory Jogger

- Methotrexate tablets are taken ONLY once a week.
- Each tablet contains 2.5mg of methotrexate
- DO NOT EVER TAKE 10MG TABLETS as this can lead to confusion in the amount of methotrexate you take.
- Regular blood tests (usually monthly) are necessary to check on the blood and liver.
- If you develop a dry cough lasting more than a month, or become breathless whilst on methotrexate, you should report this urgently to your GP or Consultant, so that a chest x-ray can be arranged.
- Methotrexate can interact with other drugs – please ALWAYS check when you are given a new prescription.
- You should not take certain antibiotics e.g TRIMETHOPRIN or SEPTRIN
- You should not drink more than 10 units of alcohol per week (5 small glasses of wine, or 5 pints of beer, or 10 small spirits)
- MEN – you should not father a child whilst taking methotrexate.
- WOMEN – you should not become pregnant whilst taking methotrexate.
- MEN and WOMEN – you should stop taking methotrexate for 3 months before trying for a family.

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Contact Details

If you have any further questions or need advice about your treatment phone the Rheumatology Advice line on

01202 442849.

www.poole.nhs.uk/our_services/rheumatology.asp

For further health-related information, please contact:

The Health Information & Resource Centre

Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Longfleet Road

Poole

BH15 2JB

Telephone: (01202) 448003

Rheumatology Practitioners

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We can supply this information in larger print, on audiotape, or have it translated for you. A member of staff will be happy to discuss this with you. Please call PALS on 01202 448499 or the Health Information Centre on 01202 448003 for further advice