

Children's Arthritis Treatment Information

Methotrexate

Why does your child need to take methotrexate?

Weekly Methotrexate is a treatment for ongoing disease activity taken in addition to anti-inflammatory drugs. It is currently considered the most useful drug for the treatment of juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Methotrexate is usually well tolerated in children.

How Does Your Child Take Methotrexate?

It is usually given by mouth once a week and it is important to take Methotrexate on the same day each week. It may take several weeks for it to be effective and during this time the dose may be adjusted.

The Methotrexate tablets are yellow. They come in two strengths 2.5 mg and 10 mg. It is better absorbed without food but children may find it more acceptable to take with food. You may be given another tablet, Folic Acid, to take once a week, 5 days after the Methotrexate tablet, to reduce potential side effects.

Side Effects

Most patients taking Methotrexate have very few problems but some do suffer some of the following side effects:

- Nausea and/or abdominal pain: This can sometimes be overcome by splitting the dose over 12 or 24 hours. If this continues to be a problem, the Methotrexate can be given by an injection given under the skin
- Mouth ulcers, sore mouth or throat
- Skin rashes, sun sensitivity, itching: Methotrexate does make your skin more sensitive to the sun, during the summer you should use a high factor sunscreen
- Slight hair loss: The hair returns to normal when the Methotrexate is stopped

Rare side effects

Lungs: Very rarely Methotrexate causes problems with the lungs. A persistent cough or shortness of breath should be reported to the Rheumatology clinic or your GP.

Blood Tests

A regular blood test is the only way in which the doctors can tell if Methotrexate is affecting the liver or bone marrow. This is why it is important that it is carried out every month. If any blood test is abnormal it may involve further blood tests or temporarily stopping the drug.

Special Precautions

Methotrexate can interact with other drugs. **Cotrimoxazole** (septrin) and **Trimethoprim** are antibiotics and should not be taken while your child is on Methotrexate. So please check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking other medication.

- Keep tablets in a safe place out of the reach of all children.
- Alcohol may interact with Methotrexate but small amounts are unlikely to be a problem

Rheumatology department Patient Information

- Methotrexate can harm an unborn baby so pregnancy must be avoided while on this medication.

Immunisation

Live vaccines must not be given whilst taking this drug.

Chickenpox

Chickenpox is caused by a virus. Methotrexate may lower your ability to fight chickenpox and you may become unwell. You can be given an anti-viral medication if you have been in direct contact with chickenpox or are in the early stages of the illness. Please contact your GP or the Rheumatology Department.

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

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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