

Medication Information Sheet

methotrexate (meth-oh-TREX-ate)

This document provides general information about your medication. It does not replace the advice of your health care professional. Always discuss your therapy with your health care professional and refer to the package insert for more details.

Other Name: Generic brand(s) available

Appearance: Yellow tablets or clear, yellow liquid for injection that may be mixed into larger bags of fluids

What is this medication for?

- For treating many types of cancer

What should I do before I have this medication?

- Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you have or had significant medical condition(s), especially if you have or had:
 - ◊ liver disease (such as hepatitis),
 - ◊ kidney problems,
 - ◊ or if you have any allergies.
- People with cancer have a higher risk of getting other cancers or developing blood clots. Some cancer medications may increase these risks, especially if used for a long period of time. Discuss any concerns about this medication with your health care team.

How will this medication affect sex, pregnancy and breastfeeding?

- The use of this medication in men or women may cause harm to the unborn baby if pregnancy occurs. Let your health care team know if you or your partner is pregnant, becomes pregnant during treatment, or if you are breastfeeding
- If there is ANY chance that you or your partner may become pregnant, you and your partner together must:
 - ► **Use 2 effective forms of birth control at the same time** while taking this drug: Keep using birth control until at least **6 months** after the last dose (some suggest for up to one year). Discuss with your healthcare team
- Do not breastfeed while taking this drug
- This medication may affect fertility (ability to get pregnant)

How is this medication given?

- Methotrexate injection is given into a vein or into muscle.

Oral tablets:

- ◊ Take these by mouth exactly as directed by your doctor; swallow whole with a glass of water on an empty stomach, at least 1 hour before or 2 hours after food or other medications.
- ◊ Avoid taking methotrexate tablets with milk products, since the drug may not work as well.
- ◊ It is important to keep well hydrated to prevent kidney problems; drink plenty of fluids (6-8 glasses per day) and void (urinate) frequently.
- ◊ If you are receiving high doses, you will also be given leucovorin (a type of vitamin) and fluids into your vein to reduce the side effects of methotrexate.
- ◊ If you are given leucovorin, see our leucovorin patient sheet for more information

What else do I need to know while on this medication?

- This medication can interact with other medications and can result in the treatment not working as well or cause severe side effects.
- Make sure your health care team knows about all your medications (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals and supplements). Check with your health care team before starting or stopping any of them.
- **For mild aches and pain or fever:**
 - ◊ If you feel unwell, take your temperature before taking any medications for pain or fever. They may hide a fever.
 - ◊ You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) tablets. Ask your health care team about the right dose for you.
 - ◊ Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), naproxen (Aleve®) or aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid, ASA), including low dose aspirin for heart conditions, may increase your chance of bleeding. Talk to your health care team before you start or stop these medications.
 - ◊ **Talk to your health care team or go to the closest emergency room right away if you have a fever.** See the [Fever](#) pamphlet for more information.
- Do not drink alcohol while taking methotrexate.

How should I safely store this medication?

- Oral tablets:
- Store in the original packaging at room temperature, away from heat, light or moisture. Keep out of reach of children and pets.
- Do not throw out any unused drugs at home. Bring them to your pharmacy for safe disposal.

What are the side effects of this medication?

The following side effects have been seen in people using methotrexate with other chemotherapy drugs, so some of these effects may also be related to chemotherapy.

You may not have all of the side effects below. You may have side effects that are not listed.

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
More Common Side Effects	
<p>Nausea and vomiting</p> <p>May occur in hours to days after your treatment. It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it if it happens.</p> <p>To help prevent nausea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take anti-nausea medication(s) as prescribed to you by your doctor. • Drink clear liquids and have small meals. Get fresh air and rest. • Do not eat spicy, fried foods or foods with a strong smell. • Limit caffeine (e.g. coffee, tea) and alcohol. <p>If you have nausea or vomiting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take anti-nausea medication(s) as prescribed to you by your doctor. • Contact your health care team if the prescribed anti-nausea medications are not helping to control your nausea and vomiting. <p>Also see Nausea & Vomiting pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>Contact your healthcare team if nausea lasts more than 48 hours or vomiting lasts more than 24 hours</p>
<p>Abnormal liver lab tests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may have yellowish skin or eyes, unusually dark pee or pain on the 	<p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or</p>

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
More Common Side Effects	
<p>right side of your belly. Talk to your health care team if this happens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your doctor may monitor your liver regularly with a blood test. 	if severe
<p>Diarrhea</p> <p>May happen days to weeks after you get your treatment.</p> <p>If you have diarrhea :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take anti-diarrhea medication if your health care team prescribed it. Avoid foods or drinks with artificial sweetener (e.g. chewing gum, “diet” drinks), coffee and alcohol. Eat many small meals and snacks instead of 2 or 3 large meals. Drink at least 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day. Talk to your health care team if you can’t drink 6-8 cups of liquids each day when you have diarrhea. You may need special liquids with salt and sugar, called Oral Rehydration Therapy. <p>See the Diarrhea pamphlet for more information.</p>	Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe
<p>Mouth sores</p> <p>You may have round, painful, white or gray sores inside your mouth. They can occur on the tongue, lips, gums, or inside your cheeks. In more severe cases they may make it hard to swallow, eat or to brush your teeth. They usually last 1 to 2 weeks.</p> <p>To help prevent mouth sores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take care of your mouth by gently brushing and flossing regularly. Rinse your mouth often. Do not use mouthwashes with alcohol. Instead, try a homemade mouthwash: Mix 1 teaspoonful of baking soda and 1 teaspoonful of salt in 4 cups (1L) of water. <p>If you have mouth sores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check with your health care team as soon as you notice mouth or lip sores or if it hurts to swallow. Avoid hot, spicy, acidic, hard or crunchy foods.. Your doctor may prescribe a mouthwash to relieve mouth sores and prevent infection. <p>See the Mouth Care pamphlet for more information.</p>	Contact your health care team as soon as possible
Unusual bleeding or bruising	Get emergency

Side effects and what to do	When to contact doctor?
More Common Side Effects	
<p>You may have black stools, cough up blood, blood in your urine, purple or red dots on your skin or bleeding that will not stop.</p> <p>Fever, chills, infection</p> <p>You have a fever if your temperature taken in your mouth (oral temperature) is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher at any time OR • 38.0°C (or 100.4°F) or higher for at least one hour. <p>While you are getting chemotherapy treatments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep a digital thermometer at home and take your temperature if you feel hot or unwell (for example, chills). • Avoid taking medications that treat a fever before you take your temperature (for example, Tylenol®, acetaminophen, Advil® or ibuprofen) as they may hide a fever. • Do not eat or drink anything hot or cold right before taking your temperature. • Wash your hands often. • Check with your doctor before getting any vaccines, surgeries, medical procedures or visiting your dentist. <p>If you have a fever, talk to your health care team or go to the closest emergency room. See our Neutropenia (Low white blood cell count) pamphlet for more information.</p>	<p>medical help right away</p>
<p>Rash</p> <p>Rash may be severe in some rare cases and cause your skin to blister or peel. If this happens, get emergency medical help right away.</p> <p>To prevent and treat dry skin,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use skin moisturizer. • Protect your skin from the sun and the cold. • Use sunscreen with UVA and UVB protection and a SPF of at least 30. 	<p>Contact your health care team if no improvement or if severe</p>

Other rare, but serious side effects are possible.

If you experience ANY of the following, speak to your cancer health care provider or get emergency medical help right away:

- Signs of an allergic reaction such as fever, rash, swollen lips, face or tongue, chest and throat tightness
- Severe chest, belly (may extend to your back) or arm pain
- Pain, swelling or hardening of a vein in your arm or leg
- Trouble breathing or coughing up blood
- Feeling confused, having a sudden loss of vision, trouble speaking or moving your arms or legs
- Signs of kidney problems such as lower back pain, swelling, pee less than usual and have unusual weight gain
- Joint pains, fever and confusion

For more links on how to manage your symptoms go to www.cancercareontario.ca/symptoms.

The information set out in the medication information sheets, regimen information sheets, and symptom management information (for patients) contained in the Drug Formulary (the "Formulary") is intended to be used by health professionals and patients for informational purposes only. The information is not intended to cover all possible uses, directions, precautions, drug interactions or side effects of a certain drug, nor should it be used to indicate that use of a particular drug is safe, appropriate or effective for a given condition.

A patient should always consult a healthcare provider if he/she has any questions regarding the information set out in the Formulary. The information in the Formulary is not intended to act as or replace medical advice and should not be relied upon in any such regard. All uses of the Formulary are subject to clinical judgment and actual prescribing patterns may not follow the information provided in the Formulary.