



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



Ospidéal Ollscoile Chorcaí
Cork University Hospital

Department of Rheumatology

Methotrexate in Injection Form Patient Information Sheet

Why am I prescribed Methotrexate in injection form?

Methotrexate is sometimes prescribed in liquid form, in an injection, which is given under the skin.

It is used to treat several different types of rheumatic diseases including rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis.

It is often prescribed to people who cannot tolerate Methotrexate tablets. Methotrexate injections can reduce inflammation by reducing the activity of the immune system, so it is always used with care.

When do I take my Methotrexate Injection?

Methotrexate injections are self administered **once a week on the same day**. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will show you how to administer this injection and will arrange for the home nursing team to contact you about the first dose

They will also give you a step-by-step guide to help you remember how to give it when you are at home.

What dose should I take?

Methotrexate injections are available in a variety of doses. These injections are colour coded so you should always check the dose is correct.

Your doctor will advise you what dose you should be on.

How will I dispose of the syringe?

Your doctor or nurse will arrange for special bins to be delivered to your house or pharmacy.

What are the possible side effects?

Some patients report some local irritation around the injection site. If this happens place a clean cool cloth over the area until the irritation subsides.

Very rarely Methotrexate injections can cause a feeling of sickness, diarrhoea, mouth ulcers, hair loss and skin rashes.

Taking Methotrexate injections can affect the blood count (one of the effects is that fewer blood cells are made) and can make you more likely to develop infection. If you develop a **sore throat** or **other infection**, or if you have a **fever**, if you develop **unexplained bruising or bleeding**, or if you develop any **new symptoms** after starting Methotrexate injections you should see your doctor.

Rarely Methotrexate injections cause inflammation of the lung with breathlessness. If you become **breathless**, you should see you doctor immediately.

While taking Methotrexate in injection form you should avoid direct sun light and the use of tanning beds. You should use SPF 30 or higher when out. There have been rare reports of lymphomas and other malignancies in patients who have been treated with Methotrexate.

If you have not had chickenpox but come into contact with someone who had chickenpox or shingles, or if you develop chickenpox or shingles while you are on Methotrexate in injection form, you should see your doctor immediately as you may need special treatment.

Most doctors prescribe folic acid tablets to patients who are taking Methotrexate injections as this can reduce the likelihood of side effects.

Do I need any special checks while on Methotrexate Injections?

Because Methotrexate in injection form can affect the blood count and sometimes cause liver problems, your doctor will arrange for you to have regular blood checks while taking this drug.

You may be asked to keep a record booklet with your blood test results. Bring this with you when you visit your GP or the hospital

Can I take other medicines along with Methotrexate Injections?

Some drugs interact with Methotrexate in injection form so you should always let any doctor treating you know that you are taking it.

Special care is needed with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. You may only take anti-inflammatory drugs if your doctor prescribes them to you.

Do not take 'over the counter' or herbal preparations without discussing this first with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Do not take drugs containing trimethoprim (for example septrin).

Can I have vaccinations while on Methotrexate Injections?

It is recommended that you should not be immunised using any of the 'live' vaccines such as polio, rubella and yellow fever.

An 'inactivated' polio vaccine can be given instead of the 'live' polio vaccine and the inactivated version should be also given to people you are in close contact with such as members of your household.

If you are on Methotrexate in injection form you should avoid contact with children who have been given the 'live' polio vaccine for 4-6 weeks after vaccination.

Yearly flu vaccines and pneumovax are safe and recommended however you should stop your Methotrexate injection for 2 weeks after the flu vaccination.

Do Methotrexate Injections affect fertility or pregnancy?

Methotrexate injections may result in a temporary decrease in fertility. Pregnancy should be avoided while you are taking this medication. Once Methotrexate injections have been stopped both women and men must wait at least 3 months before trying to conceive.

If you are planning a family, or if you become pregnant while taking Methotrexate injections you should discuss this with your doctor as soon as possible.

Taking Methotrexate is contraindicated while breastfeeding.

May I drink alcohol while taking Methotrexate Injections?

If you drink alcohol you should only drink it in small amounts because Methotrexate and alcohol can interact and damage your liver. Discuss this with your doctor.

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Always remember!

Check dose of your Methotrexate injection by checking the colour of the injection box. Keep all medicines out of reach of children. Please note that this information leaflet does not list all the side effects of Methotrexate injections. Always read the drug information leaflet which comes with your medicine.