



Provincial Health Services Authority

**For the Patient:** Methotrexate (intrathecal)  
Other names: MTX

- **Methotrexate** (meth oh trex´ ate) is a drug that is used to treat many types of cancers. It is a clear yellow liquid that is injected into your spine (intrathecal) or into a device implanted under the skin on the top of your head (Ommaya reservoir).
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to methotrexate before taking methotrexate.
- A **blood test** may be taken before each treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- Other drugs may **interact** with methotrexate. Tell your doctor if you are taking any other drugs as you may need extra blood tests or your dose may need to be changed. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs.
- Methotrexate may cause **sterility** in men and **menopause** in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with methotrexate.
- Methotrexate may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with methotrexate. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- **Tell** doctors or dentists that you are being treated with methotrexate before you receive any treatment from them.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<b>Pain or tenderness</b> may occur where the needle was placed.	Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<b>Headache</b> may rarely occur. Headache should last no longer than 8 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day.</li> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids the day before and the day of treatment.</li> <li>• On the day of treatment, lie down as much as possible after receiving methotrexate intrathecal injection.</li> <li>• Call your doctor <b>immediately</b> if you experience a headache that lasts longer than 8 hours after receiving methotrexate intrathecal injection.</li> </ul>
<b>Nausea</b> does not usually occur with methotrexate intrathecal injection.	
<b>Hair loss</b> does not occur with methotrexate Intrathecal injection.	

**SEE YOUR DOCTOR OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:**

- Signs of **meningitis** such as sudden onset of severe headache, back pain, stiff neck, muscle weakness, nausea and vomiting.
- A **headache** that lasts longer than 8 hours.
- **Unexpected mood changes** including confusion, irritability and drowsiness.
- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer), chills, cough, pain or burning when you pass urine.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black tarry stools, blood in urine, pinpoint red spots on skin, and extensive bruising.
- Signs of an **allergic reaction** (rare) soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heart beat, face swelling, or breathing problems.
- **Seizures or loss of consciousness.**
- Signs of **lung problems** such as shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing.

**SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:**

- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- Signs of **kidney problems** such as lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs.

