



Provincial Health Services Authority

For the Patient: Methotrexate Injection

Other names:

- 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 a vein **or into a muscle**.
- 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.
- Your healthcare team may tell you to **drink** plenty of liquids e.g., 8-12 cups (2000-3000 mL or 70-100 oz) a day. This helps prevent kidney problems.
- Other drugs such as acitretin (SORIATANE®), cyclosporine (NEORAL®), digoxin (LANOXIN®), nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs e.g., ibuprofen (ADVIL®), some antibiotics e.g., penicillins (APO-PEN VK®), sulfonamides (APO-SULFATRIM®), and trimethoprim (APO-TRIMETHOPRIM®), phenytoin (DILANTIN®), probenecid (BENURYL®), and salicylates (ASPIRIN®), may **interact** with methotrexate. Tell your doctor if you are taking these or 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.
- **Alcohol** may increase the risk of liver problems with methotrexate and should be avoided.
- 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** your doctor, dentist, and other health professionals that you are being treated with methotrexate before you receive any treatment from them.

Changes in blood counts

This drug may cause temporary changes in your blood counts. Your doctor will be following these changes carefully by ordering regular blood tests. Adjustment of your treatment may be needed in certain circumstances.

BLOOD COUNTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Normal white blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection. When they are low, you are at greater risk of having an infection.</p>	<p>To help prevent infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often and always after using the bathroom. • Take care of your skin and mouth. • Avoid crowds and people who are sick. • Call your healthcare team immediately at the first sign of an infection such as fever (over 38°C or 100°F by an oral thermometer), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.
<p>Normal platelets help your blood to clot normally after an injury (e.g., cut). When the platelet count is low you may be more likely to bruise or bleed.</p>	<p>To help prevent bleeding problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try not to bruise, cut, or burn yourself. • Clean your nose by blowing gently. Do not pick your nose. • Avoid constipation. • Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily. Maintain good oral hygiene. <p>Some medications such as ASA (e.g., ASPIRIN®) or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL®) may increase your risk of bleeding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not stop taking any medication that has been prescribed by your doctor (e.g., ASA for your heart). • For minor pain, try acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) first, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable.

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
Pain or tenderness may occur where the needle was placed.	Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day.
Nausea and vomiting may occur after your treatment. <i>If you are vomiting and it is not controlled, you can quickly become dehydrated.</i>	You may be given a prescription for anti-nausea drug(s) to take before your treatment and/or at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred , so follow directions closely. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Try the ideas in <i>Practical Tips to Manage Nausea</i>.* <i>Tell your healthcare team if nausea or vomiting continues or is not controlled with your anti-nausea drug(s).</i>
Skin rashes may occur.	To help itching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can use calamine lotion. • If very irritating, call your healthcare team during office hours. • Otherwise make sure to mention it at your next visit.
Fever and chills may occur shortly after treatment with methotrexate. Fever should last no longer than 24 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day. • Fever (<i>over 38°C or 100°F by an oral thermometer</i>) which occurs more than a few days after treatment may be the sign of an infection. Report this to your healthcare team immediately.
Diarrhea may occur. <i>If you have diarrhea and it is not controlled, you can quickly become dehydrated.</i>	If diarrhea is a problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Avoid high fibre foods as outlined in <i>Food Choices to Help Manage Diarrhea</i>.* <i>Tell your healthcare team if you have diarrhea for more than 24 hours.</i>

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Sore mouth may occur a few days after treatment. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth, or in the throat. Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. If your gums bleed, use gauze instead of a brush. Use baking soda instead of toothpaste. • Make a mouthwash with ¼ teaspoon baking soda AND ¼ teaspoon salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day. • Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Try with a Sore Mouth</i>.*
<p>Muscle or joint pain may rarely occur a few days after your treatment.</p>	<p>You may take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®). Tell your healthcare team if the pain interferes with your activity.</p>
<p>Loss of appetite and weight loss are common and may persist long after discontinuation of methotrexate.</p>	<p>Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite</i>.*</p>
<p>Tiredness, lack of energy and sometimes dizziness may occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired. • Try the ideas in <i>Fatigue/Tiredness – Patient Handout</i>.*
<p>Hair loss is rare with methotrexate. Your hair will grow back once you stop treatment with methotrexate. Colour and texture may change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush. • Care should be taken with use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes, and perms. <p>If hair loss is a problem, refer to <i>Resources for Hair Loss and Appearance Changes – Patient Handout</i>.*</p>
<p>Your skin may darken in some areas.</p>	<p>This will slowly return to normal once you stop treatment with methotrexate.</p>
<p>Your skin may sunburn easily.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell your healthcare team if you have a severe sunburn or skin reaction such as itching, rash, or swelling after sun exposure. • Refer to <i>Your Medication Sun Sensitivity and Sunscreens</i>* or the <i>BC Health Guide</i> for more information.

***Please ask your nurse or pharmacist for a copy.**

