

How to administer oral Methotrexate at home

Methotrexate is a chemotherapy medicine used to treat certain types of cancer and leukaemia.

It is given by mouth in tablet form once a week in the evening. To ensure all of the drug is absorbed, it should be taken with water on an empty stomach and your child should wait an hour after this before eating.

Avoid taking with milk or milk products, as this will affect absorption of the drug. Your child should take it on the same day each week, often a Wednesday or Thursday.

If your child is also taking Septrin, otherwise known as Co-trimoxazole, they should not take it on the same day as Methotrexate.

In the week your child has a Lumbar Puncture (LP) with intrathecal Methotrexate, you must not give a dose of oral Methotrexate in addition that week.

Common side effects

Bone marrow suppression

With Methotrexate this usually only occurs when using higher doses. The bone marrow is where blood cells are made.

There will be a temporary reduction in how well your child's bone marrow works. This means your child may become anaemic, bruise or bleed more easily than usual, and have a higher risk of infection.

Your child's blood count will be checked regularly to see how the bone marrow is working.

Please tell your doctor if your child seems unusually tired, has bruising or bleeding, or any signs of infection, especially a high temperature. See information on 'Febrile neutropenia' in the **RED** section for what to do if your child has a temperature.

Skin rash

Please tell your doctor or nurse if your child develops a rash. They will advise you on the most appropriate treatment to use.

Nausea and vomiting

Methotrexate rarely causes nausea or vomiting. Please inform your doctor or nurse if your child feels sick.

Itchy eyes

Just as your child can develop a rash on the skin, they can get red itchy eyes. Please tell your doctor or nurse if this occurs.

Less common side effects

Temporary effect on liver function

Methotrexate can cause some mild changes to your child's liver function. This should return to normal when treatment has finished. Blood tests can be taken (LFTs) to monitor any changes.

Sore mouth and ulcers

If your child develops a sore mouth or ulceration please let your doctor or nurse know. Please refer also to the 'Mouthcare' information sheet in the **ORANGE** section.

Diarrhoea

If your child has persistent diarrhoea it is important that they do not become dehydrated, so please tell your doctor or nurse.

Important information for the safe administration of your child's chemotherapy

- Keep all medicines in a safe place where children cannot reach them.
- You should handle oral chemotherapy drugs with care and avoid touching them. If you prefer you can wear a pair of household rubber gloves to protect yourself. Do not use these gloves for any other purpose. Oral chemotherapy should always be taken as directed by your doctor.
- Methotrexate tablets are made in two different strengths, 2.5mg and 10mg. They are different sizes so always check you have been given the correct size with the pharmacist when you collect your prescription from the pharmacy.
- If your child is unable to swallow tablets you may make a solution by putting the tablets into a clean oral syringe, drawing up a small volume of water and allowing the tablets to dissolve, then give the dose to your child.
- If you accidentally forget to give a dose do not give a double dose. Inform your doctor or nurse and keep to your child's regular dose schedule.
- If you accidentally spill the solution, wash the area thoroughly with soapy water.
- If the solution accidentally splashes into your eyes, wash with plenty of running water for at least ten minutes.
- After use, wash the syringe in warm soapy water separately from other items and allow to air dry before using it again.
- If your child vomits after taking their dose, do not repeat the dose. Seek advice from your local hospital.
- Dispose of paper towels or vomit soiled waste in a separate rubbish bag and place in your normal rubbish.
- Please return any unused tablets to your local hospital for disposal.

If at any time you are concerned about any of these or any other side effects please telephone the contact numbers on the contact sheet in your patient/parent held oncology record for advice from your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.