



# Methotrexate

For treating  
juvenile arthritis

## About your medicine

Methotrexate reduces inflammation in the joints and helps with the pain, swelling and stiffness that can occur with juvenile arthritis. It is also used in other rheumatic diseases in children, such as dermatomyositis, lupus and scleroderma.

## How to take your Methotrexate

- Take this medicine once a week. **It should be given on the same day every week.** You might want to pick a weekend day when there is no school.
- It can be given as a pill, a liquid or a shot.
- If given by mouth, it must be taken on an empty stomach. Most kids take the oral dose as soon as they wake up and then wait one hour to eat breakfast.
- If taking the liquid form by mouth, you may mix the medicine in a small amount of apple juice or soda. Use a small glass cup for this; do not use plastic.
- The shot may be given at any time of day and does not need to be given on an empty stomach. Most families learn how to give the shot at home. You may be able to set a weekly appointment with your regular doctor to get the shot.
- Methotrexate is a slow-acting medicine. It may take 6 to 10 weeks before you notice improvement.

## Special advice when taking Methotrexate

- Take a multivitamin with folic acid every day. This will decrease side effects.
- Remember, this medicine is only taken once a week. It should be given on the same day each week.
- Please get a **flu shot** every year while taking it.
- **Do not** take the antibiotics Septra or Bactrim. All other antibiotics are OK.
- **Do not** drink alcohol while taking methotrexate.
- **Do not** get pregnant while taking methotrexate.
- **Do not** take methotrexate if you have a fever higher than 101 F.
- **Do not** take methotrexate if you come down with chickenpox.
- Store methotrexate in a cupboard out of direct light.

### To Learn More

- Rheumatology  
206-987-2057
- Ask your child's nurse  
or doctor
- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask  
your child's nurse.
- From outside the  
hospital, call the  
toll-free Family  
Interpreting Line  
1-866-583-1527.  
Tell the interpreter  
the name or extension  
you need.
- For Deaf and hard of  
hearing callers  
206-987-2280 (TTY)

### Side effects

Side effects from this medicine can include upset stomach, abnormal lab tests, fatigue, allergic reaction in the lungs (very rare), mouth sores (rare) and diarrhea. Do not sunbathe on the day you take methotrexate because it makes it easier to sunburn. *Please call if your child has any of these side effects.*

### Monthly lab monitoring

Your child will need to have regular lab tests done while on methotrexate. You may have these done at Seattle Children's lab or at your regular doctor's office. If you have them done with your family doctor, please ask that all results be faxed to us at **206-987-5060**.

**Blood tests:** Your child will need to have these blood tests once a month (or as often as your doctor tells you) while on methotrexate. Please get the blood test **one to two days before taking** the dose of methotrexate. If you get the test the first few days after the dose, it may not be accurate. Blood tests needed include:

- CBC (complete blood count: includes differential and platelet count)
- Creatinine, ALT, AST (blood enzyme tests)
- ESR (erythrocyte sedimentation rate)
- Other blood tests based on your disease.

**Urine test:** UA (urinalysis). You may only need this test every other visit. Please do not give a urine specimen during your menstrual period.

### Here is your individualized prescription.

**Dose:** \_\_\_\_\_ milligrams (mg)    **Number of pills:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fill syringe to:** \_\_\_\_\_