



Methotrexate

Methotrexate is a medicine that helps with pain, swelling and stiffness from juvenile arthritis. It is also used to treat other rheumatic diseases in children.

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. Or, your provider might prescribe a folic acid pill instead. Folic acid helps to 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.
- If you are taking methotrexate, it is important not to get live virus vaccines.
- **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. If you have a fever for more than 3 days, call your primary care provider.
- **Do not** take methotrexate if you come down with chickenpox.
- Store methotrexate in a cupboard out of direct light.
- Do not sunbathe on the day you take methotrexate because it makes it easier to sunburn.

To Learn More

- Rheumatology
206-987-2057
- Ask your child's nurse
or doctor
- 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. *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 **206-985-3218**.

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 **1 to 2 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

Blood tests are done regularly to watch for any early signs of liver damage. If blood tests come back abnormal it does not mean there is liver damage. If results are abnormal, your medicine dose will be changed to bring your child's blood tests back to normal range.

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: _____