

Oral Methotrexate

What is Methotrexate?

- Also known as a Disease Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drug (DMARDs)
- It helps reduce:
 - Joint pain
 - Swelling
 - Stiffness
 - Long-term joint damage

Your Methotrexate prescription:

- Your methotrexate tablets will be prescribed by your GP
- Please take methotrexate once a week
- You will also be prescribed Folic acid 5mg to take every day except the day of methotrexate day
- For example if you took Methotrexate every Monday you would then take Folic acid Tuesday to Sunday
- Please allow 12 weeks for methotrexate to take effect

Blood monitoring:

- Once every 2 weeks for 6 weeks, then once monthly for 3 months, then once every 3 months thereafter
- If your methotrexate dose increases then you must go back to every 2 weekly blood monitoring
- It is your responsibility to contact your GP to arrange these bloods
- If there is anything abnormal with your blood results your GP will inform us or may want to recheck them again

Important Safety Information:

Avoid certain antibiotics while on methotrexate:

- Trimethoprim
- Co-Trimoxazole - **These antibiotics can interact dangerously with methotrexate.**

Side Effects:

Most people tolerate Methotrexate, but side effects can occur in a small number of patients.

- Side effects that can be common are gastrointestinal side effects such as nausea, diarrhoea, and generally feeling unwell (we would advise to persevere and hopefully as you get use to medication these symptoms will start to lessen however if not please contact us)
- If you notice any persistent sore throat, breathlessness, then please contact our nurse's advice line.

More information:

- **Arthritis UK** – [Methotrexate](#)
- Patient information leaflet included with your medication

Infections/Antibiotics:

Withhold methotrexate if you:

- Have any active infection
- Are taking antibiotics
- Resume methotrexate 2 weeks after you are free from infection and no longer on antibiotics.
- We also advise keeping up to date with regular vaccinations such as flu, COVID, pneumococcal and shingles vaccinations.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding:

- Women must use contraception while taking methotrexate. If you are planning a pregnancy please contact the Rheumatology department to discuss further.
- You must not take methotrexate if you are pregnant or trying for a baby, as it can harm an unborn baby.
- Methotrexate should be stopped at least 3 months before becoming pregnant.
- If you become pregnant while taking methotrexate, or within 3 months of stopping it, contact your doctor immediately.
- Men can continue methotrexate when trying for a baby - current research shows it is safe.
- If you are planning a pregnancy, you should take folic acid to support your health and your baby's development.
- You should not breastfeed while taking methotrexate, as the drug may pass into breast milk and the effects on a baby are unknown.
- Your doctors will usually recommend restarting methotrexate once breastfeeding has finished, to reduce the risk of an arthritis flare.