

Methotrexate (meth-o-TREX-ate)

Also Known As: Mexate®

How It Is Given:

- Orally (by mouth)
- Intravenously (by vein)
- Intramuscularly (into muscle)
- Intrathecally (into spinal fluid)

Early Side Effects (beginning within the first week) Can Include:

- Mouth sores.
- Increased skin sensitivity to sunlight.
- Diarrhea.
- Headaches when given intrathecally.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Kidney damage if you do not get a lot of fluids when given high-dose methotrexate.

Late Side Effect (beginning after the first week) Can Include:

- A temporary decrease in red blood cells (oxygen carrying cells), white blood cells (infection fighting cells), and platelets (blood clotting cells). This can result in anemia, infection or bleeding. Follow the guidelines your nurse will give you.

Special Points:

- It is best if you take this medicine yourself. Do not have a caregiver touch it. The drug can be absorbed through the skin. If you are unable to take it without help, your caregiver must:
 - Wear disposable gloves when handling the tablet.
 - Place the used gloves in a zip lock bag. Close the opening tightly.
 - Place the bag in a larger bag that can hold all of the bagged gloves that are used over time.
 - Wash his or her hands well after removing the gloves.

Bring the bag to the hospital for disposal when you come in for outpatient visits.

- This medicine can harm an unborn child. Ask your doctor or nurse about the type of birth control you should use. Tell your doctor immediately if you think you or your partner might be pregnant.
- Ask your doctor about taking multivitamins that have folic acid. They may interfere with this medicine.

- Acidic foods may interfere with the action of methotrexate. You may be advised to follow a special diet when you are given high dose methotrexate.
- This medicine can decrease your ability to have a child. It can affect both men and women. Discuss this with your doctor before you start treatment.
- Aspirin, NSAIDs (e.g., Motrin[®], Aleve[®]), and vitamin E can cause bleeding problems. Do not take medicine that has them unless your doctor says it is okay. Your nurse will give you a fact card that tells you what drugs you cannot take and what you can use instead.
- Protect your skin from the sun. Wear long sleeves, long pants, and a hat if possible. Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or greater when in the sun.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you are taking any other medicines or if you have changed medicines. Some may change the way this drug works. Include:
 - Medicines that do and do not require a prescription.
 - Herbal remedies.
 - Vitamins.
 - Dietary supplements.

Call Your Doctor or Nurse If You:

- Have a fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher.
- Develop a sore throat or mouth sores.
- Have any sign of bleeding. This includes:
 - Black bowel movements.
 - Bruising.
 - Faint red rash.
 - Other signs of bleeding.
- Have any unexpected, unexplained problems.
- Have any questions or concerns.

The information about this drug is selective and does not cover all possible side effects; others may occur. Please report any problems to your doctor.