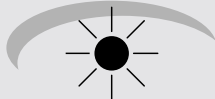


Scottish Uveitis Network



Information about ...

Methotrexate



Ophthalmology Service

Scottish Uveitis National Managed Clinical Network

What is methotrexate?

Methotrexate is a drug used in the treatment of inflammatory conditions. It reduces inflammation in these conditions. Clinical studies have shown that methotrexate can also control inflammation within the eye.

When should you be careful taking methotrexate?

Be sure to tell your doctor if:

- You have any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- You have episodes of infection.
- If you come into contact with someone who has chicken pox or shingles, you should contact your GP or the ophthalmology department for advice.
- Unusual shortness of breath, cough or feverishness.
- You are on any other medication.

You should not take methotrexate if you are pregnant, trying for a baby or breast-feeding.

Can I have vaccinations while I am on methotrexate?

- You should not take live vaccines while on methotrexate.
- Pneumovax and an annual flu vaccine are recommended while on this treatment.
- Please arrange to see your general practitioner each year to discuss this.

How should methotrexate be taken?

- It is normally taken in tablet form once a week on the same day. It is never taken every day. Choose a day that is best for you to take your treatment and keep to that routine.
- Swallow tablets whole, do not suck or chew them.
- Other forms of methotrexate may be available. Please discuss these options with your doctor.
- Your Specialist will tell you what dose to take which may change continually. Usually you start on a low dose (e.g. 5 mg or 7.5 mg per week). Your dose may be increased depending on how you respond to treatment. Your doctor may recommend that you also take a vitamin supplement called folic acid which can help to reduce the likelihood of side-effects.
- Methotrexate tablets are available in 2.5 mg and 10mg tablets; the two strengths have different shapes but a very similar color. Therefore, always check that you have the correct medication.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you realize. It is reasonable to take your methotrexate tablets a day later if you forget on your regular methotrexate day. However, if you completely forget, do not double your next dose, but make a note of it to tell your Specialist or GP at your next appointment.
- If you take too many tablets or someone else accidentally takes your medicine, contact your doctor, pharmacist or the nearest hospital straight away.

Will I need blood tests?

- You will need blood tests in the form of a full blood count and renal and liver function tests before starting treatment and repeated weekly until therapy stabilised, thereafter monitored every 2–3 months.

What are the possible side effects?

- Nausea vomiting and diarrhoea can occur, but may improve with continued use or reduced dose. Eat little and often. Stick to simple foods and drink plenty of water to replace any lost fluids.
- Methotrexate can affect your bone marrow cause a reduction in white cells, which normal prevent infection, or platelets which stop bleeding and reduce bruising. Your blood is monitored regularly to identify any problems early.
- Lung fibrosis may occur. A chest x-ray is performed prior to starting treatment.
- There may be an increased risk of infection with this treatment. It is important to inform your doctor if you feel unwell.
- Mouth ulcers, hair loss and skin rashes may occur.
- Disturbance in the blood counts and liver function can occur. These usually return to normal once methotrexate is reduced or stopped.
- Should you develop any side effects, please contact your GP or ophthalmologist for advice.

Important: If you develop any of the following, let your doctor know straight away:

- Sore throat, unusual bruising, mouth ulcers
- Sickness, abdominal pain, dark urine
- Shortness of breath, cough

Can methotrexate be used when pregnant or breast feeding?

- You should not take methotrexate if you are or think you may be pregnant, as it could harm an unborn baby.
- Men taking immunosuppressive treatments also need to take precautions.
- Reliable contraception should be used by men and women taking methotrexate.
- Methotrexate should be stopped at least 3-6 months before trying for a baby.
- Methotrexate should not be taken when breast feeding.

How long will methotrexate take to work?

- Mycophenolate does not work immediately. It may take up to 3 months before you notice any benefit.

May I drink alcohol while taking methotrexate?

- If you drink alcohol, you should only do so in small amounts because alcohol and methotrexate can interact and damage your liver.

If you experience problems, contact your GP or your local ophthalmology department:

Contact number: _____

Further information

The Scottish Uveitis National Managed Clinical Network is a nationally supported network to improve and ensure an equality of care for patients with uveitis throughout Scotland.

www.sun.scot.nhs.uk

The Uveitis Information Group (Scotland) is a patient-led charity, based in Scotland, run by volunteers. They provide information, leaflets and fact sheets on uveitis which can be accessed via their site.

Uveitis Information Group

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Email: info@uveitis.net
Website: **www.uveitis.net**

This leaflet has been produced by the Scottish Uveitis National Managed Clinical Network.

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Available on-line at: **www.sun.scot.nhs.uk**

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