

# METHOTREXATE TREATMENT

## What is methotrexate?

Methotrexate is a medication used in low doses to treat inflammatory skin conditions such as psoriasis and eczema. In much higher doses, it can also be used to treat cancer. However, the doses used for skin conditions is much lower than the doses used to treat cancer.

## Practical things to know about taking methotrexate

- Methotrexate is taken **once a week** at the same time and day of the week.
- On the days you are not taking methotrexate, take a vitamin pill called "**folic acid**" at 1 mg per day
- Pre-treatment laboratory tests usually include a full blood count with differential (CBC), kidney function tests (creatinine) and liver function tests and repeated every 3 months. The CBC is repeated 1 week after the first dose.
- Vaccines (live and/or killed) may be less effective in those taking methotrexate, so it is best if you are fully immunized before starting methotrexate.

## Side-effects of methotrexate

- The most common side-effect is tummy pain and nausea - if these happen you can take it after meals or divide the dose in half and take at bedtime on two days a week.
- Low blood counts (hemoglobin, white blood cells and/or platelets) can happen if you overdose on methotrexate or if you don't take folic acid
- Scarring (fibrosis or cirrhosis) of the liver can rarely happen with long-term treatment, especially if there is fatty liver disease, diabetes, high lipid levels, obesity, viral hepatitis or alcoholic liver damage.
- Your child may become more sensitive to sunlight.
- A lung reaction similar to pneumonia called interstitial pneumonia can happen very rarely. The symptoms are usually fever, cough (often dry and hacking), and shortness of breath
- Although uncommon, methotrexate may rarely result in reactivation of tuberculosis or opportunistic bacterial, fungal or viral infections.
- With overdose, ulceration of skin and mucous membranes and diffuse hair loss can happen.
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## Important things to know about taking methotrexate

- Your child should not begin (or change the does) of any new medications while on methotrexate unless your doctor has approved it. Avoid cotrimoxazole/septrax. Drugs like penicillin, minocycline and ciprofloxacin and increase methotrexate levels. Aspirin and ibuprofen can slow down the body's ability to get rid of methotrexate.
- Do not allow your child to become dehydrated while on methotrexate.
- If your child has any side effects or symptoms like shortness of breath, fever, mouth sores, sore throat, or infections...**STOP METHOTREXATE AND CALL OUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY.**
- Do not miss appointments or blood tests.
- Notify your physician at once if an accidental overdoes occurs.