



METHOTREXATE

OTHER NAMES: MTX

PURPOSE: Methotrexate is a drug used in the treatment of cancer. It interferes with the growth and spread of tumor cells.

ADMINISTRATION: Methotrexate may be given by injection into a vein, a muscle, or into the spinal fluid.
Methotrexate may also be taken by mouth in the form of tablets. Take on an empty stomach.
Drink plenty of fluids.

SIDE EFFECTS: Not all patients will experience all side effects.

SIDE EFFECT	MANAGEMENT
Lowered white blood cell counts. You may be more susceptible to infection, cold and flu and experience symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, chills and shakes, pain and burning when you pass urine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash hands often and avoid people with infections if possible. Contact your doctor or nurse immediately if your temperature is 38°C (100°F) or above or if you have any other signs of infection. Do not take acetaminophen (Tylenol® or others) for fever or other signs of infection unless approved by your doctor or nurse.
Lowered platelet counts which may cause unusual bleeding or bruising.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brush teeth gently with a soft toothbrush Blow nose gently Prevent constipation Avoid cuts, burns and falls Report persistent bleeding to your doctor Do not take ASA (Aspirin® or others) or any nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (ie., naproxen, ibuprofen, indomethacin, etc.) if you have low platelets. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if starting new medications.
Nausea and vomiting. Most people have little or no nausea. More common with high dose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may be given medications to prevent or control nausea and vomiting. Drink plenty of fluids.
Mouth sores, including the lining of the mouth, throat, tongue, and gums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report sore mouth to your doctor or nurse. Use a soft toothbrush, floss, and brush gently. Rinse with club soda or other prescribed mouthwash. Do not use commercial mouthwashes.
Other symptoms you may experience include diarrhea, rash, itching, sensitivity to the sun, hair loss or thinning, and loss of appetite.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report these to your doctor. Avoid excessive exposure to the sun, wear protective clothing and use sunscreen.

OTHER IMPORTANT PRECAUTIONS:

- Your doctor may give you a medication called leucovorin to reduce the harmful effects of methotrexate on normal body cells. Be sure to take this “rescue” exactly as directed.
- Other medications may interact with methotrexate. Do not start taking new medications or herbal products without checking with your doctor or pharmacist. Tell your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you are taking any other prescription or non-prescription medicine, vitamin, or herbal product.
- Inform other doctors, dentists, or pharmacists that you are receiving methotrexate.
- Inform your doctor, nurse, and pharmacist if you develop any new allergies or sensitivities.
- Discuss fertility and birth control with your doctor if necessary.
- It is important to have blood counts and other lab tests as ordered. Your dose may be altered accordingly.
- If you experience any symptoms or problems not listed above, inform your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.
- Precautions should be taken when handling cytotoxic drugs. If you handle tablets or capsules with unprotected hands, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

- STORAGE:
- Store methotrexate at room temperature away from heat, direct light, and moisture.
 - Whenever possible, return unused medication to the pharmacy from which it was dispensed for proper disposal.

If you have any questions regarding this or any other drug therapy, please phone your cancer centre.

Cross Cancer Institute – (780) 432-8771, Tom Baker Cancer Centre – (403) 521-3764
Central Alberta Cancer Centre – (403) 343-4802, Grande Prairie Cancer Centre – (780) 538-7288
Lethbridge Cancer Centre – (403) 329-0633, Medicine Hat Cancer Centre – (403) 529-8817

OR
