



Frequently Asked Questions About Methotrexate in RA

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Is methotrexate a cure?

Unfortunately, there is no cure for rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Methotrexate helps relieve many of the symptoms of RA, but it won't cure the disease.

How long will I take methotrexate?

You can take methotrexate as long as it's effective and helps improve your symptoms. Your doctor may prescribe other medications along with methotrexate as your disease progresses.

Is methotrexate the medicine I see in TV commercials?

Probably not. Chances are the medications you have seen advertised on TV are called biologic therapies, which are commonly prescribed by rheumatologists and are often used concurrently with methotrexate.

Does methotrexate work as well as those newer medicines?

Although many biologic therapies are now available, methotrexate is still considered the cornerstone of RA treatment and is usually the first medicine prescribed. In fact, biologic therapies have been found to work better and longer when combined with methotrexate.

Does methotrexate therapy require any lab tests?

Some RA drugs, including methotrexate, can cause organ damage. That's why you'll have to undergo routine lab tests so your doctor can monitor your liver and kidney functions. These tests are performed as often as your doctor thinks best, usually every several weeks.

Can I drink alcohol while taking methotrexate?

Methotrexate has been associated with liver damage, so many doctors recommend abstaining from alcohol while you are on therapy. Make sure you ask your doctor before mixing methotrexate and alcohol.

Can I take methotrexate if I'm pregnant?

No. Methotrexate can cause negative effects, including fetal death of an unborn child. Women of childbearing age should not take methotrexate until pregnancy has been excluded. Pregnancy should be avoided if either partner is taking methotrexate. Methotrexate also should not be taken by nursing mothers.



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Why did my dose change?

Probably because your current dose wasn't controlling your symptoms as well as it once was. Your doctor most likely increased your dose to better control your symptoms.

How long does it take to work?

Most patients see symptom relief in about 3 to 6 weeks, although it can take up to 12 weeks for methotrexate to reach its full effect. That's why it's important to give the therapy enough time to work for you.

Will it make me sick?

It's true that some patients experience nausea and vomiting while taking methotrexate pills. Studies have shown that subcutaneous methotrexate (an injection under the skin) may be easier on the stomach than pills.

Do I have to take it on the same day every week?

Yes, you should take your methotrexate on the same day each week.

Can I take ibuprofen with my methotrexate?

Yes, you can take ibuprofen with methotrexate.

Why do some people take folic acid with methotrexate?

Methotrexate, originally created as a cancer drug, stops cells from multiplying by blocking a form of vitamin B called folic acid. Depleting your body of folic acid can have consequences, including side effects such as nausea, vomiting, hair loss, and mouth ulcers. The good news is that taking a folic acid supplement (a synthetic form of folate) can help reduce these side effects. One study found that folic acid reduced stomach upset and mouth sores by 79%.

Does methotrexate cause weight gain?

There's no evidence that methotrexate causes weight gain.

