

Methotrexate Tips & Tricks

For Patients by Patients

Methotrexate (also called MTX) is a proven medication

MTX is used to treat several conditions including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and psoriasis. MTX is often used as one of the first lines of defence to treat arthritis and is used in low doses. MTX can be taken on its own or in combination with other medications (it is safe to take together with anti-inflammatory, stomach medications and antibiotics with the exception of trimethoprim (or sulfa-containing antibiotics, Septra and Bactrim). MTX should not be used during pregnancy. (Some health care providers suggest waiting 1 to 3 months after stopping MTX to ensure the medication has been cleared from the body. There are no reports of babies being born with MTX-related birth defects when a woman stops taking this medication before conception.)



MTX works slowly

Since every person is different, MTX may work a little differently for you than for someone else. You may begin to notice an improvement in your symptoms as early as 6 weeks after starting MTX, but for someone else it may take up to 12 weeks to feel a difference. It is important to give MTX time to work and to keep taking it even if you don't experience immediate results.



MTX is well-studied

MTX has been studied extensively. We know its benefits and we also know potential side effects to expect. A recent survey¹ highlighted that 44% of people taking MTX continue to do so because it helps them manage their condition.

Tips & Tricks



People make adjustments to taking MTX for various reasons. The most cited reasons and the percentage of responses were:

Important occasion or wanting to drink alcohol	49%
Schedule or travel	24%
Managing side effects	14%
Illness	7%
Other reasons	6%

"Don't be afraid to mention your side effects [to your health-care team]!"



IMPORTANT: When thinking about adjusting your medications, ensure you talk to your doctor.

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The top 3 adaptations made by people taking MTX:

1. Also take folic acid (76%)
2. Take MTX at night before bed (43%)
3. Take MTX on the weekend (36%)

"Take on an evening, drink lots of water, especially the day of and day after."

Some other approaches that you might consider include: taking MTX injections instead of pills, splitting doses (this means taking some of your MTX before bed, for example, and the rest the next morning), taking MTX with an anti-nausea medication, or taking dextromethorphan. Other options may also make sense for you. Discuss these with your doctor if you feel you need a change or if you feel that what you are currently trying is not working well for you.

Certain foods- do they make things better or worse?

People have experimented with various combinations of food with their MTX. When asked for what worked for them, here is what they mentioned:

YES
Protein
Milk
Carbohydrates

NO
Milk/lactose, red meat
Acidic foods, alcohol
Spicy foods, gluten
Greasy foods

"Take MTX on a full stomach."

So what is right for you?

That is a great question! Everyone is different. That means that you might not have any problems taking MTX, and someone else might. You might find taking MTX on the weekend works for you, but it doesn't work for others. You might also be feeling well with one schedule and need to make an adaptation for a special circumstance. Some suggestions provided here such as seeing if different foods help or worsen your ability to take MTX and its effects can usually be tried on your own. Other suggestions like making changes to dosage and timing should be discussed with your doctor.

"The injection is so much easier than the pills!"

"Take your self care as a priority."



IMPORTANT: Everyone is different. What works for you may not work for others. When dealing with medications & associated timing and dosages (including dosage-splitting), ensure you talk with your doctor.

This resource is based on a survey administered by CAPA (May 2017) and has been reviewed by rheumatology medical experts for general purposes. Please consult your doctor about your specific situation.