

# Methotrexate (Mexate<sup>®</sup>, Amethopterin)

Methotrexate is an anti-cancer medicine that stops cell growth and division. This medicine is used to treat many types of cancer.

## How Is It Given?

- tablet by mouth
- pale yellow liquid by IV (intravenous)
- by muscle injection (intramuscular)
- by spinal injection (intrathecal)

## What Side Effects May Occur?

This is a partial list of the side effects you may have with this medicine. You may have some, all or none of those listed, or you may have other side effects not listed. Most side effects last only a short time.

### Common:

- lowered white blood cell and platelet counts (occurs seven to nine days after treatment)
- loss of appetite
- diarrhea
- mouth sores (can occur 3 to 4 weeks after treatment)
- decreased kidney function
- sun sensitivity

### Less common:

- nausea (upset stomach) and vomiting (throwing up)
- sunburn-type rash 1 to 5 days after treatment

- shortness of breath
- hair loss
- dizziness
- back or chest pain during treatment
- acne
- hives
- joint pain
- kidney damage
- yellowing of your skin and eyes (may occur 1 to 10 days after treatment)

### Side effects with high doses:

- lowered white blood cell and platelet count
- decreased kidney function
- mouth sores (can occur 3 to 5 days after treatment)
- chest pain
- dizziness
- nausea and vomiting — may occur during treatment and last up to 72 hours

### Side effects with spinal injections:

- headache
- back pain
- blurred vision
- confusion
- dizziness
- seizures

**(over)**

## Special Notes

- With high-dose methotrexate, you may take another medicine called leucovorin. It is important to take this medicine as scheduled and to not miss any doses. Call your doctor or nurse right away if you have any problems keeping this medicine down.
- It is also important to drink a lot of liquids to flush your kidneys.
- Some medicines interact with methotrexate. Let your doctor know if you are taking any of the following:
  - aspirin
  - anti-inflammatory medicines (such as ibuprofen)
  - phenytoin (Dilantin<sup>®</sup>)
  - probenecid (Benemid<sup>®</sup>)
  - tetracyclines
  - theophylline
  - certain antibiotics.
- Do not take any other medicines, either prescription or over-the-counter without first talking with your doctor or pharmacist.
- Do not drink alcohol while taking methotrexate.
- Avoid folic acid, found in most vitamin supplements, during treatments.

- Wear sunscreen and protective clothing while outside and avoid being in the sun too long.
- If you are receiving methotrexate by spinal injection, be aware of the specific side effects and call your doctor if they occur.
- You may have changes in your menstrual cycle or sperm count. Discuss birth control measures with your doctor. You should not get pregnant or father a child while taking this medicine.

## When To Call Your Doctor

You should call your doctor if you have:

- fever, chills or sore throat
- unusual bleeding or bruising
- trouble breathing or wheezing
- hives or rash
- uncontrolled nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- mouth sores
- yellowing of your skin or eyes
- blood in your urine or stools
- decreased amount of urine.

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you want more complete medicine information or if you have questions.