



Methotrexate is a medicine used to treat conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory conditions, e.g. psoriasis. It works by reducing inflammation.

Tips for safe use:



Methotrexate is taken once a week, not every day; this is different to most other medicines. Phone reminders, pill containers or documenting doses in a record book can help to remember the once-weekly dosing.



Taking folic acid regularly is important and reduces side effects. Folic acid is also taken once a week, but on a different day to methotrexate. You and your clinician will choose which days to take each medicine on. Some people find it helpful to remember *methotrexate on Monday, folic acid on Friday*.



Treatment takes some time to work, usually 3 – 12 weeks. Taking extra doses or taking it more often can be dangerous and will not make the medicine work better or more quickly.



Regular blood tests are required for safety and to check for side effects. It's important to have all the blood tests that you've been asked to get.



Get recommended vaccinations, e.g. COVID-19, influenza ("flu jab"), pneumococcus



Avoid or limit alcohol to no more than 1 – 2 standard drinks, once or twice a week as drinking alcohol increases the chance of serious side effects



Use effective contraception (birth control) during treatment. After stopping methotrexate, females should keep using effective contraception for 3 – 6 months and males for 3 months.



Store methotrexate in a cool, dry place that is out of sight and reach of children, e.g. high or locked cupboard. For more information about safe storage of medicines, see: <https://healthify.nz/medicines-a-z/s/storing-medicines>.



Report use of any new medicines. Tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about any new medicines you are taking, including ones you buy yourself and any herbal products or other supplements. Avoid anti-inflammatories, e.g. ibuprofen, diclofenac, aspirin, that have not been prescribed to you.

Methotrexate can have side effects

If methotrexate makes you feel worse or you're worried about any new symptoms, talk to your doctor, nurse, pharmacist or call Healthline (**0800 611 116**).



Talk to a healthcare professional as soon as you can if you have these side effects:



Nausea or vomiting
(feeling sick or throwing up)



Sore throat



Mouth ulcers



Abdominal pain (sore tummy)



Fever
(running a temperature)



Shortness of breath



Dark urine (pee)



Unexplained bruising



Persistent cough



For further information, see: <https://healthify.nz/medicines-a-z/m/methotrexate> and <https://bpac.org.nz/2026/methotrexate.aspx>