

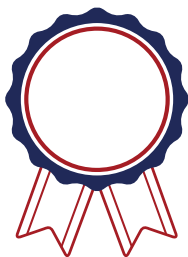
Pairing Methotrexate and Biologic Therapy

Useful Information For You



Methotrexate Can Help Some Biologics Work Even Better

You've just been prescribed a biologic therapy. Taking methotrexate in combination with biologic therapy can help in two ways: (1) it can make the biologic even more effective, and (2) it can prolong the amount of time you'll be able to stay on the biologic. In other words, methotrexate can help you get the most out of your biologic therapy. This might seem strange, especially if you've already taken methotrexate alone and it wasn't enough to control your disease, but taking methotrexate and a biologic together (which is called combination therapy) can help you reach your treatment goal.



Methotrexate: An Established Treatment

Methotrexate is a medication that is used to treat several conditions including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and psoriasis. It can also be used to treat some cancers (although the dose you take is much lower than the dose for cancer). Methotrexate works by modifying your immune system's response, which is altered in inflammatory arthritis. It has been studied very extensively, it often works very well, and we know what potential side effects to expect.



How to Take Methotrexate

Methotrexate can be taken as a pill or as an injection that goes under the skin. Like any medication, it is important to take it exactly as prescribed and to understand why it was prescribed in that way. Pay close attention to how frequently you are supposed to take your methotrexate.



Points to Remember about Methotrexate

Most people starting biologic therapy will have taken methotrexate before. If methotrexate is new to you, you should know that it is a medication that works slowly. Some people begin to notice an improvement in their symptoms after 6 weeks but it can take up to 12 weeks for you to feel a difference. Give the methotrexate time to work and keep taking it even if you don't experience immediate results. Also, if you experience side effects, keep taking your methotrexate while you and your health care professional develop a strategy to manage these side effects. Possible strategies include taking folic acid or adjusting the dose of methotrexate.



How to Manage Side Effects

You might experience side effects with methotrexate, especially when you and your doctor are still figuring out the right dose for you. The most common of these are: dizziness, headache, nausea, drowsiness, mouth sores, and decreased appetite. Although these side effects can be burdensome, don't stop taking your methotrexate until you've seen your doctor. Some simple changes, like reducing the dose, taking folic acid, taking an anti-emetic agent (a medication that helps you feel less nauseous) or switching from a pill form of methotrexate to an injection, could ease these side effects.

Also, be sure to take these important precautions:

- Because methotrexate may affect your liver, limit the amount of alcohol you drink.
- Because methotrexate can make you more sensitive to the sun, use broad spectrum sunscreen before long periods of exposure to the sun.
- Follow your doctor's instructions about regular blood testing.



Do Not Take Methotrexate if These Apply to You:

- If you are allergic to methotrexate
- If you are planning a pregnancy (this applies to both women and men)
- If you have serious liver or renal disease



Contact Your Health Care Team if the Following Happens:

- If you have a cough, fever, or difficulty breathing
- If you have sores in your nose or mouth
- If you need surgery
- If you become pregnant, or your partner does
- If you need a live vaccine (like the yellow fever vaccine)