

Methotrexate as Immunosuppression for Chronic Graft-versus-Host Disease (GVHD)

What is Methotrexate?

Methotrexate is a drug that is used to treat many kinds of cancer. It is also used to prevent and treat GVHD because it stops the T cells (active in GVHD) from dividing.

How will I receive Methotrexate?

Methotrexate to treat chronic GVHD is given by mouth. It is given in a low dose once per week. You should take your dose on the same day each week. Write down on a calendar or piece of paper when you are supposed to use your medicine, or use a reminder on your smart phone. Keep the calendar or paper where you can see it. After you take your dose of medicine, cross off that date on your calendar or paper. This will help you remember if you took the medicine or if you still need to take it. If you need other ideas to help you keep track of your schedule, ask your pharmacist or other healthcare provider.

What are the common side effects?

Please see, “Managing Symptoms at Home”, in the manual and refer to the Symptom Management section.

What You May Expect?	What Should You Do?
Decreased blood counts (lowered platelet, red and white blood cells) may occur. You may feel weak and tired. You may develop infections more easily and may bruise more easily. Your health care providers will test your blood frequently to monitor your blood counts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report any signs of infection, fever, and unusual bleeding or bruising.
Nausea and vomiting may occur while you are taking Methotrexate. Many people have little or no nausea.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may be given a prescription for an antinausea drug(s) to take at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred. Drink plenty of liquids. Eat and drink often in small amounts.

<p>Sore mouth may occur a few days after treatment. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth or in the throat. Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. • Please see the “Mouth Pain/Mucositis” section of the patient manual.
<p>Your skin may sunburn more easily.</p>	<p>To help prevent sunburn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid direct sunlight. • Wear a hat, long sleeves, and long pants or skirt outside on sunny days. • Apply a sun block lotion with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 30 or greater. • Don’t forget to apply sunscreen to the lips, ears, and back of hands.

These are the most common side effects. Others may occur. Please report any problems to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.

Call and Seek Help Immediately If You Have:

- Signs of an infection such as fever, chills, cough, sore throat, pain or burning when you pass urine; redness, pain or swelling of any area of your body; sores forming anywhere on your body.
- Signs of bleeding problems such as black tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin.

Contact Your Nurse Or Doctor If You Have:

- Signs of an allergic reaction such as skin redness, rash or swelling of your lips, tongue, mouth or throat.
- Signs of liver problems such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-colored stools.
- Signs of kidney problems such as lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs, numbness or tingling in feet or hands.
- Signs of lung problems such as dry cough, shortness of breath or chest pain.
- Painful mouth sores or sores on your lips.
- Severe skin reaction where you have had prior radiation.
- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Easy bruising or bleeding.

Special Instructions:

Your doctor will monitor your blood counts, liver labs, and kidney labs weekly for first month, then every two weeks for one month, then monthly if stable.

Methotrexate may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. Use birth control while being treated with Methotrexate. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment. Talk to your doctor or nurse about any additional questions.

Drug-Drug Interactions:

There are many drugs that may **interact** with Methotrexate. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs

Drug-Food Interactions

None known at this time.

For more complete information please request an additional teaching sheet from the National Library of Medicine at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html, or your nurse or pharmacist.