Methotrexate (Trexall®)  
("meth oh TREKs ate")

How drug is given: by vein (IV)

Purpose: to kill cancer cells in leukemia, lymphoma, breast cancer, sarcoma, lung cancer, trophoblastic neoplasm, head and neck cancer, and other cancers; may also be used for treatment in other conditions (e.g., psoriasis, arthritis)

Things that may occur during or within hours of treatment

- Mild to moderate nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite may occur. You may be given medicine to help with this.

Things that may occur a few days to weeks later

1. Your blood cell counts may drop. This is known as bone marrow suppression. This includes a decrease in your:
   - Red blood cells, which carry oxygen in your body to help give you energy
   - White blood cells, which fight infection in your body
   - Platelets, which help clot the blood to stop bleeding

   This may happen 7 to 14 days after the drug is given and then blood counts should return to normal. If you have a fever of 100.5°F (39°C) or higher, chills, a cough, or any bleeding problems, tell your doctor or nurse right away.

2. You may get mouth sores 7 to 10 days after this drug is given. It is important to keep your mouth clean. A soft-bristle toothbrush should be used for brushing your teeth. You may have a burning feeling and redness inside the mouth or on the lips. Use a baking soda mouth rinse 4 or 5 times a day.

   Other mouth rinses may be ordered by your doctor. Do not use mouth washes that have alcohol in them because they will dry out the mouth. If you cannot eat or swallow because of this, let your doctor or nurse know. Check with your doctor before having any dental work done.

3. Diarrhea may occur, but it is usually mild.

Mouth Rinse Recipe:  
Mix: 1 tsp salt or baking soda with 8 oz. glass of water
4. Your hair may thin or fall out after treatment starts. Hair may grow back during treatment.

5. Your skin may be more sensitive in the sun. Use sunscreen SPF 30 or higher when you go outside. Do not go to tanning booths.

6. Eyes may get itchy and watery and bright light may bother you. Natural tears or saline eye drops may help with these symptoms.

7. Some patients may feel very tired, also known as fatigue. You may need to rest or take naps more often. Mild to moderate exercise can also be helpful in maintaining your energy. Talk with your doctor or nurse.

8. When getting high doses of this drug, your kidneys could be hurt and not work as well. You will be given a large amount of fluid in your vein while you are getting methotrexate to try to help prevent this problem. It is also very important that you try to drink 2 to 3 quarts of fluid a day (about 12 glasses) for 2 to 3 days after treatment. Blood and urine tests will be done to check how well your kidneys work.

Things that may occur after treatment ends (even months to years later)

- Long term treatment with methotrexate may cause liver damage, which may not get better. Talk with your doctor about drinking any alcohol while you are on this drug.

- Fertility:
  - It is still very important to use birth control if you are having sex, because this drug could hurt an unborn baby.
  - Men may become sterile and may want to think about sperm banking prior to chemotherapy.
  - For women, your period (menstrual cycle) may not be regular for a while or may stop completely and you may not be able to get pregnant.
  - If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your doctor or nurse.

The above information includes some, but not necessarily all, of the possible side effects of this medication. The side effects in this teaching sheet may not be the same ones you experience. Your side effects may be different, depending on how often you receive treatment (your schedule) and how much you receive each time (your dosage). Side effects may also vary if you take other medications. Please talk with your doctor or nurse if you have questions about possible side effects you may experience. This document should not take the place of conversations with members of your health care team. If you experience any significant change in your health during or after treatment, contact a member of your health care team right away.