**Methotrexate (Trexall®)**
(“meth-oh-TREKs-ate”)

**How drug is given:** by mouth

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

**How to take this drug**

- Swallow each tablet whole; do not crush, open, or chew. If you have trouble swallowing the tablet, the pharmacist will give you specific instructions.

- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular dosing schedule. **Do not double dose.**

- Wash hands after taking the medication. Avoid handling crushed or broken tablets.

**Storage**

- Store this medicine at room temperature, away from excess heat and moisture. Keep this medicine in its original container, out of reach of children and pets.

- If you have unused oral chemotherapy pills (tablets or capsules), please return them to the pharmacy where the prescription was filled. Do not flush down the toilet, dump in the sink, or throw away in the trash.

**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. Loose stools or diarrhea may occur within a few days after the drug is started. You may take loperamide (Imodium A-D®) to help control diarrhea. You can buy this at most drug stores. It is also important to drink more fluids (water, juice, sports drinks). If these do not help within 24 hours, call your doctor or nurse.
2. 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

   If you have a fever of 100.5°F (39°C) or higher, chills, a cough, or any bleeding problems, call your doctor or nurse right away.

3. You may get mouth sores 7 to 10 days after this drug is started. 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.

   **Mouth Rinse Recipe:**
   Mix: 1 tsp salt or baking soda with 8 oz. glass of water

   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.

4. Some of your hair may fall out with treatment. You may lose hair on your head as well as facial and body hair. Hair may grow back during treatment.

5. You may see changes in your skin and nails. Sunlight may cause your skin to burn easier, so use a sunscreen of SPF 30 or greater when you go outside. Do not go to tanning booths.

6. 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.

7. You may feel pain or weakness in your joints or muscles. If these bother you, ask your doctor or nurse what type of drugs you may use to help with this pain.

**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 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.

Managing your oral chemotherapy schedule at home can be challenging. To help you with this, consider using tools to help you keep track of your schedule and any side effects you may have. You can find these tools online at www.dana-farber.org/OralChemoDiary.

THIS SPACE RESERVED FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS OR NOTES FOR THE PATIENT AND FAMILY: