



## Methotrexate (Trexall®) – by vein (IV)

(“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, **call your cancer care team 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.

**Mouth Rinse Recipe:**

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

Other mouth rinses may be ordered by your cancer care team. 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 cancer care team know. Check with your cancer care team before having any dental work done.

3. 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. Be sure to drink more fluids (water, juice, sports drinks). If these do not help within 24 hours, **call your cancer care team**.
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. 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.
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 **important** to drink 2 to 3 quarts of fluid a day (about 12 glasses) for 2 to 3 days after treatment. Your kidneys will be monitored with blood and urine tests.

### 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 cancer care team about drinking 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 cancer care team.

*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.*



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