

LOW-DOSE METHOTREXATE FOR PLAQUE PSORIASIS

Plaque psoriasis is an autoimmune condition that affects your skin. While it can't be cured, many people with plaque psoriasis find that their symptoms can be well controlled with the right treatment. Methotrexate is a medicine used in low doses to treat plaque psoriasis.

Use this action plan to discuss methotrexate with your dermatologist. It can help you understand the benefits and risks, as well as the need for monitoring and checks.

Methotrexate acts to control the disease

Methotrexate doesn't just work on the surface of your skin like topical treatments (eg, creams, ointments and lotions). It works by interrupting the overactive immune system that causes psoriasis. This slows down the growth of skin cells and reduces inflammation.



Methotrexate is taken once a week.

It can be taken as a tablet or given as an injection under your skin (subcutaneous) or into your muscle (intramuscular).

Compared with tablets, methotrexate injections

- ✓ are more effective, and
- ✓ may cause fewer side effects.

Methotrexate

- ✓ keeps plaque psoriasis under control
- ✓ reduces flares
- ✓ decreases the need for glucocorticoids (also known as corticosteroids or steroids)
- ✓ reduces the chance of complications caused by uncontrolled inflammation

Focus on facts

Myths about methotrexate can be barriers to treatment. Knowing the facts helps people stick to their treatment and improves results.

Fact Methotrexate for plaque psoriasis is used safely and effectively at low doses – it's not considered chemotherapy at these doses.	Fact Methotrexate takes time to work – you might not notice an improvement in your skin for 6–12 weeks.	Fact Methotrexate injections can be safely given by yourself, or a family member or friend.	Fact People taking methotrexate for plaque psoriasis can safely make physical contact with pregnant women.
Myth Low-dose methotrexate is chemotherapy.	Myth You will notice the benefits of methotrexate straight away.	Myth Giving yourself methotrexate injections is unsafe.	Myth People taking methotrexate cannot be near pregnant women.

Ongoing care

Blood tests

Regular blood tests are used to check treatment is working and monitor for side effects, measuring kidney and liver function, and doing full blood count. Over time, these tests are needed less often.

Clinical review

Continue regular reviews of your plaque psoriasis with your prescribing doctor. How often depends on how active the disease is.

Vaccinations

Keep your pneumococcal and influenza vaccinations up to date.

Skin checks

Methotrexate can slightly increase the risk of some forms of skin cancer. Annual skin checks are recommended.

Reproductive health

You should seek specialist advice if you plan to have children. Women should use birth control while taking methotrexate, stop methotrexate 3 months before planning a pregnancy, and avoid breastfeeding while on methotrexate.



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Psoriasis Australia
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Name:

Date:

TAKING LOW-DOSE METHOTREXATE

Share this action plan with your healthcare team to help you achieve your treatment goals.

When I take my medicines			
	When	Day of the week	Dose mg
Methotrexate	Once a week		
Folic acid <i>Taking folic acid can help reduce the side effects of methotrexate</i>	On different days of the week from methotrexate		

Next review due: _____

Other medicines I use for plaque psoriasis

Side effects of methotrexate

Like all medicines, methotrexate may cause side effects.

Most common side effects include:

- ▶ nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea
- ▶ mouth ulcers
- ▶ tiredness, headache and feeling foggy
- ▶ increased skin sensitivity to the sun.

Talk to your doctor if you are concerned. Side effects may be reduced by taking methotrexate with food or in the evening.

When to contact my doctor

Urgently

If I develop any new infections. Signs of infection include fever, and red or painful skin or wounds.

If I develop breathing difficulties and/or a dry cough.

As soon as possible

If I experience a flare-up of my plaque psoriasis.

Regularly

To make appointments for routine tests to monitor my disease and medicines.

To check that I am up to date with my vaccines and seek advice for travel vaccines.

If I am taking or plan to take any other medicines, including over-the-counter, herbal and naturopathic medicines.

Further information

NPS MedicineWise (nps.org.au/dermatology-consumers)

Download the **MedicineWise app** to keep track of your medicines and access health information such as blood test results.

NPS Medicines Line: **1300 633 424**



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Helping consumers and health professionals make safe and wise therapeutic decisions about biological disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (bDMARDs) and other specialised medicines. Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health through the Value in Prescribing bDMARDs Program Grant.



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