Guide for Adult Patients
Self Administering Methotrexate by Injection at Home

February 2010

To be held by the patient with their “Patient Held Blood Monitoring Booklet”.
Guide for Adult Patients Self Administering Methotrexate by Injection at Home

This is a step-by-step guide to giving once weekly Methotrexate by subcutaneous (under the skin) injection.

Methotrexate belongs to a group of drugs known as cytotoxics (drugs that are used to treat patients who have cancer). In rheumatology the drug is used in much smaller doses to produce an anti-inflammatory effect.

The process of teaching you how to give the injection will be a sequence of events.

1. First you will be given information to read about the drug
2. Then you will be shown by a specialist nurse how to prepare the equipment and give the injection
3. Following this you will prepare the equipment and give the injection under supervision
4. Finally you will prepare and give the injection, as you will at home.

At each stage of the teaching process (see page 22) you will be asked to sign that you have received and are happy with the training you have been given and that you feel confident to continue to the next step.

To ensure that the injection procedure is done safely, below is a list of the main points to remember when preparing equipment, handling the drug and disposing of used equipment afterwards.

If you are or think you maybe pregnant or are breastfeeding it is recommended that you do not handle the drug.

- Wash your hands carefully before and after giving the injection
- Handle the syringe and needle carefully
- You will always be given syringes containing the exact amount to be given
- Keep the syringes in their box until you need to use them. They should be stored at room temperature below 25 degrees celcius, preferably in a locked cupboard, and away from children’s reach.
- Waste should be disposed of as instructed
- Contact the rheumatology nurse for specific advice if you are traveling away from home, when you inject Methotrexate. Telephone 01895 279673.
How To Give Methotrexate Injections At Home

CHECK YOU HAVE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT
Methotrexate syringe for injection  Clean table surface
Cytotoxic labeled sharps bin   Kitchen roll

PREPARING YOUR WORKING AREA
1. Collect the equipment and take it carefully to where the injection will be given before you start assembling
2. No people or pets should be present in the room
3. Wash working surface with liquid detergent and allow to dry
4. Arrange the equipment on the clean surface
5. Wash your hands carefully with soap and dry with kitchen roll
6. If you are the carer administering for someone else put on gloves provided
7. Ensure the injection site is clean
8. Open the box containing the Methotrexate syringe, check that the packaging is intact.

GIVING THE METHOTREXATE
See the metoject step by step guide to administration.

AFTER ADMINISTERING THE METHOTREXATE
1. Used syringes and gloves must be placed in the cytotoxic labeled sharps bin. The bin MUST ALWAYS be stored out of the reach of children and pets with the lid closed. Lock the bin when it is two thirds full and inform Central Homecare that you require a new bin.
2. Unused syringes must be returned to Central Homecare.
3. If for some reason only part of the dose is given discard the remainder in the sharps bin.
4. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after the procedure.
DISPOSAL OF WASTE
1. All waste produced i.e. syringe, needle, kitchen towel must be placed in the cytotoxic sharps bin.
2. Store the sharps bin out of the reach of children and pets and in an area where it cannot come into contact with food or water when it is in use.

WHAT TO DO WHEN DEALING WITH SPILLAGES

On the skin
Wash the affected area with plenty of soap and water. Do not scrub as intact skin provides protection. Contact your doctor for advice if you experience any adverse effects.

In the eyes
Wash the eye(s) using plenty of water. Contact your doctor for advice if you experience any adverse effects.

On work surfaces and floors
Open the Home Health Spill Kit and follow the procedure. Inform the Rheumatology Nurse to arrange collection of waste.

On clothing
Wearing a pair of protective gloves, blot dry with a paper towel. Clothing should be changed and washed separately to other items.

Wash Hands Thoroughly

Contact Telephone Numbers
Rheumatology Department 01895 279682
Rheumatology Nurse 01895 279673
Pharmacy Department (Hillingdon Hospital) 01895 238282
Central Homecare (Freephone) 0800 9800686
24hr Hotline 07973397896
Information on Methotrexate

Methotrexate is a slow acting drug, which reduces disease activity. It may take up to 3 months, during which time the dose may need to be adjusted, to have its full effect. It can be given by mouth or injection and is usually given once a week. It is important to take methotrexate on the same day each week. In the event of an overdose, contact your doctor immediately.

BLOOD TESTS

It is important that while on this drug you have your blood tested regularly (full blood count and liver function tests). When you first start taking the drug you will usually have your blood tested every two weeks. These tests will be reduced to once a month when the dose is established. The tests should be repeated every six weeks whilst you remain on the drug.

SIDE EFFECTS

Side effects include mouth ulcers, pain on passing urine and rashes, which may worsen on exposure to sunlight. The bone marrow (where the blood cells are made) and the liver may be affected rarely. These side effects will be picked up early by the blood tests and settle if the dose is reduced or the drug stopped. There are usually no long-term side effects after the blood tests have returned to normal. You should let the doctor know if you suffer from any of the following:

- abnormal bruising
- a persistent cough
- breathlessness
- sore mouth or ulcers

as you may need to stop taking the drug. This list of side effects is not exhaustive. Each injection has an information leaflet in the box. Read this carefully before using the injections and if you have any further questions contact the rheumatology nurse.
SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

- Methotrexate can interact with other drugs (e.g. trimethoprim, co-trimoxazole, phenytoin and anti-malarial drugs) so always check with a doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicine or herbal supplements.
- Methotrexate should not be taken during pregnancy.
- Store the medicine in a safe place out of the reach of children and pets.
- Wash your hands after handling the medicine.
- Care should be taken with respect to infectious diseases and immunisations during methotrexate therapy. Live vaccines should preferably be avoided. If you are attending the GP for vaccination you should check if it is a live vaccine. Exposure to infectious diseases such as chickenpox should be avoided. If contact with chickenpox does occur, varicella zoster immunoglobulin should be given within 72 hours (please contact your doctor as soon as possible).
Languages/ Alternative Formats

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format. Please contact: 01895 279973

Fadlan waydii haddii aad warbixintan ku rabto luqad ama hab kale. Fadlan la xidhiidh 01895 279 973

Jezeli chcialbys uzyskac te informacje w innym języku lub w dużej czcionce popros pracownika oddziału o kontakt pod numerem telefonu: 01895 279973

如果你需要這些資料的其他語言版本、大字体、或音頻格式，請致電01895 279 973查詢。

إذا كنت تود الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، بالأحرف الكبيرة أو بشكل شرطي صوتي، يرجى الاتصال بالرقم التالي 01895279973.