

Methotrexate, Ebetrex®, Injexate Methotrexate®, Metoject®, Trexan® – in the treatment of rheumatic diseases

Indications

Methotrexate is used for treatment of indications such as active rheumatoid arthritis, arthritic psoriasis, juvenile arthritis and other long-term joint inflammations and inflammatory connective tissue diseases.

Drug product and mode of action

Methotrexate belongs to the class of traditional antirheumatic drugs and is the cornerstone of treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, both alone and in combination with other antirheumatic drugs. It is a so-called cytostatic drug that alleviates the rheumatic inflammatory reaction in the joints, skin and elsewhere in the body.

Dosage and method of administration

Methotrexate is available as tablets and injections. It is taken once a week, always on the same day of the week. The usual dose is 10–25 mg/week. One tablet contains either 2.5 or 10 mg methotrexate. **Tablets are taken with meals, with plenty of fluid.** Dairy products should be avoided two hours before and after the intake of tablets. Methotrexate may also be administered as injections under the skin (subcutaneously) using either a prefilled syringe or injector pen. To prevent adverse effects, 5 mg folic acid (acid. folic.) is taken 3-12 hours after methotrexate. Sulphasalazine is not taken at the same time with methotrexate. NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) are not taken at the same time either; they are taken 8 hours after methotrexate at the earliest. Alcohol must be avoided on day when methotrexate is taken.

Adverse effects

The most common adverse effect is nausea after intake of the drug. Other less common adverse effects are mucosal irritation and sores, gastrointestinal problems such as diarrhoea and vomiting, and headache. Methotrexate may increase susceptibility to infections. The use of the drug must be stopped for the duration of infections with fever or infections that require treatment with antibiotics. It may also cause elevation of liver enzymes and a decrease in white blood cells or blood platelets.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

Methotrexate must not be used during pregnancy and breastfeeding. The use of the drug is recommended to be stopped 3 months before a planned pregnancy

Follow-up

Safety tests are **taken 2–3, 6 and 12 weeks after onset of treatment, and then once every 3–6 months**. The results are checked at the health centre. The safety tests include the following: **Basic blood count, B-NEUT and ALT. CREA, U-ChemScr, CRP and ESR** are measured in connection with treatment assessment before doctor's appointment every 6–12 months.

Other considerations

Methotrexate does not need to be stopped for surgery. The use of the drug is stopped if there are problems with wound healing. During treatment, vaccines that contain live attenuated organisms can be given with discretion. Before the onset of treatment, please check that your vaccinations are up to date. Oral and dental health must also be maintained.

Link [Reumalääkkeiden ohjeet | Reumatalo.fi | Terveyskylä.fi](#) (in Finnish)

[Wellbeing services county of Satakunta](#)