

**Training Guide for Patients &
Carers for the Home
Administration of Methotrexate by
Subcutaneous (pen device)
Injection**

Introduction

This is a step-by-step guide to assist you with injecting methotrexate subcutaneously (under the skin not muscle) once a week using a pen device. It has been developed to help manage your treatment independently at home.

If you have changed your mind about injecting yourself or this line of treatment, please discuss with your health professional as soon as possible.

Some information on methotrexate

- Methotrexate injection is given once a week. Inject on the same day each week e.g. Monday. It is important to remember there will always need to be a 7-day gap between each dose. If you need to change the day, we advise to move it 24 hours ahead each week until you reach your most suitable day.
- Folic acid is also taken once a week whilst Methotrexate injectable treatment is ongoing. Remember to never take folic acid on the same day as methotrexate and stop your oral methotrexate tablets at least a week before you start injectable methotrexate.
- You must not handle/give your methotrexate injection to anyone that is trying for a baby or if you think you might be pregnant or are breast-feeding.
- You will need to use effective contraception/barrier whilst taking methotrexate injections (where appropriate) and let your healthcare provider know if you want to conceive. You will need to be off the medication for a period of time before trying to conceive.
- Stop methotrexate if you have an infection and require antibiotics until the course is complete and infection cleared.
- Remember that you cannot have live vaccinations whilst taking injectable methotrexate. If needed e.g. yellow fever, you will need to discuss this with your GP/healthcare team well in advance of needing it.
- You will need to have regular blood tests whilst taking injectable methotrexate. The frequency will be determined by you GP. You will also

request all repeat prescriptions via your GP surgery as they will manage your care.

- Ensure alcohol consumption is kept within Government guidelines. No more than 14 units per week as the medication and alcohol can affect your liver.
- Avoid transporting methotrexate injections on public transport--if this cannot be avoided refer to page 5 (Travelling away from home when you inject methotrexate) and discuss with your health care provider first.
- Your injectable Methotrexate will have a manufacturers information leaflet in the box. Please read this alongside for specific medication information. You can also discuss any queries or concerns with your local pharmacy

How to prepare before you inject Methotrexate

- Ensure preparation area is clean with everything you need to hand.
 - Methotrexate pen device,
 - Cytotoxic sharps bin (purple lidded)
 - Tissue/gauze for any residual medication/minor bleeding after injecting.
- Ensure minimal distractions e.g. TV, radio, pet or children, as far as possible.
- Choose the injection site. Lower abdomen – avoiding a 5cm diameter around belly button or upper thighs. Alternating between the left and right side each week to limit the likelihood of irritation.
- Injection site to be clean and dry. Alternatively, an alcohol skin wipe can be used to clean the area beforehand if you prefer. Please read the instructions for use on the packet.
- Ensure injection site is free of bruising, thickened skin from scarring or skin conditions e.g. psoriasis/eczema.
- Wash hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly. Gloves can also be worn.

Preparation complete and you/carers are ready to inject methotrexate

Sit comfortably and check expiry date and dose are correct on the methotrexate device. Also check the medication is yellow and clear - no cloudiness, altered colour or particles floating in the fluid.



If there are any issues with the device, note the batch number, dispose of it in the purple sharps box and inform your pharmacy.



Carefully remove the cap on methotrexate device once you are ready to inject, put into purple lidded sharps bin and proceed with injection without delay.



At proposed injection site, position the uncapped end of the device onto the skin and ensure the clear shield is depressed. This will need to remain depressed throughout the injection process.



Once positioned correctly, press the button. A click indicates the start of the injection. Keep holding the device against the skin until all the medication has been injected.



Once complete, lift the device off the skin and the clear shield will lock in place as a protective measure – be mindful, this does not eliminate the risk of a needle stick injury completely. Dispose of used device in purple lidded sharps bin and use tissue to wipe any residual medication or minor bleeding. This will also need to be put in the purple lidded sharps bin.



If you hit a small blood vessel, it may bleed slightly, this is nothing to worry about, apply pressure until stops. This may cause a bruise to the area. Wash hands again and make note of the side (left or right) and area that was injected into.

Storage

- Injectable methotrexate can be stored at room temperature up to 25 degrees celsius. If the temperature is above this, it will need to be stored in the fridge. Be mindful not to freeze the device which can happen if the temperature is too cold or the box is touching the back of the fridge.
- Ensure it is stored in the box to protect from light and ensure adequate ventilation around the box.
- When it is time to use the device remove it from the fridge and allow to stand for 30 minutes to come to room temperature before injecting. This information applies if you are also going abroad.

Travelling away from home with injectable methotrexate

- If travelling abroad we advise speaking with the airline/airport to determine what evidence will be needed to enable the medication and a purple lidded sharps bin to be taken in hand luggage. It is important that it is carried in hand luggage due to the extreme temperatures that can be experienced in the hold.
- If above 25 degrees Celsius to store in the fridge. Be mindful not to freeze the device which can happen if the temperature is too cold or the box is touching the back of the fridge. Ensure it is stored still in the box to protect from light and ensure adequate ventilation around the box. When it is time to use the device remove it from the fridge and allow to stand for 30 minutes to come to room temperature before injecting.

Needlestick injuries

- In the event of a needlestick injury to the patient prescribed the injectable methotrexate, pinch the area to bleed the site and wash with warm soapy water and monitor the site. Contact your GP if any side effects are experienced or signs of infection.
- If a chosen carer experiences a needle stick injury, they will also need to pinch the surrounding area to bleed the site and wash with warm soapy water. They will then need to contact their GP or NHS 111 for further advice.

How to deal with spillages

Skin

- If the clear shield is not fully depressed or the device is lifted off the skin before injection complete this will lead to the needle not reaching the skin and the medication will spill down the injection site.

- If this happens, do not inject again until the next dose is due in a weeks' time on your regular day. This is because it is difficult to determine if/how much you may have injected.
- Use gloves and soak up the medication with tissue/gauze. Clean with soap and water and pat dry. Ensure gloves and tissue/gauze is disposed of in the purple lidded sharps bin. Contact your health professional if you have any adverse reactions via your GP or NHS 111.

Floor/Surfaces

- If the device is dropped and breaks or there is a spillage to the floor, for example, utilise the same protocol as above;
- Use gloves and a cloth to absorb medication, then clean with warm soapy water from the outside in and allow to dry.
- All products that have had contact with the medication will need to be put in the purple lidded bin e.g. gloves and cloth.

Contact with eyes

- In the event of the medication coming into contact with someone's eyes, immediately irrigate the eye with water. Be careful not force water into the eye. Ideally standing under a shower with your eye open to natural irrigate is best.
- Following this seek medical attention via your local minor injuries unit or speak to NHS 111 for further advice. This is especially important if your eyes become sore, you experience any side-effects, or notice any changes in your vision.

Collection and delivery of Cytotoxic sharps bin

An initial cytotoxic sharps bin will be provided by the department. When this is almost full please contact the delivery and collection service on;

0300 123 9208 **or** nwssp_hcscontrolhub@wales.nhs.uk

Ensure that you inform them you need a purple lidded bin collected and a purple lidded (cytotoxic) sharps bin delivered.

Advice line

For any further queries, concerns or to report experiencing side effects of your injectable methotrexate please contact;

Rheumatology adviceline on 01873 732046 and follow the instructions on the message.

Side effects can also be reported via the Yellow Card reporting site: [Yellow Card | Making medicines and medical devices safer \(mhra.gov.uk\)](https://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard)

In an emergency, please use 999 or NHS 111. For any queries not relating to your condition or medication please contact you GP surgery.

References:

Adapted from:

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“This document is available in Welsh / Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”