



## Methadone Information for Patients and Families

**Your doctor has prescribed Methadone for pain. The following information will help to answer common questions you might have about this medication.**

### Why Methadone?

- Methadone is a strong pain medication which belongs to the morphine family of medications
- Methadone is a long-lasting medication which means a patient only needs two or three doses per day.
- Methadone comes in tablets and liquid. Liquid is easier to take if swallowing becomes difficult.
- Methadone usually relieves nerve pain better than other medications
- Methadone is safer than other medications for people who have weak kidneys.

### What should I know about Methadone?

- Methadone is used for chronic pain or cancer pain. It is not used for acute (sudden and short-lived) pain.
- You will likely feel the Methadone working within one to two hours of taking the first dose.
- The goal of methadone is for it to provide continuous pain relief.
- It can take several days for the Methadone to reach a steady level in your body, so your doctor will usually wait three to five days before changing the amount of medication you take.
- Never stop, start, or change your Methadone dose without your doctor's approval.
- Methadone should never be used by someone other than the person it is prescribed for. If used incorrectly Methadone can have serious consequences.
- Methadone interacts with some medications and foods such as antibiotics and grapefruit. Always check with your health-care team before starting any new medications.
- Methadone is sometimes used to treat drug addiction but the use of Methadone for pain is very different from its use for treating addiction.

### How do I take my Methadone?

- Methadone should be taken at the same times each day.
- If you miss a dose, and it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your regular schedule, otherwise take the missed dose as soon as possible.
- If you vomit shortly after taking a dose and are unsure about whether or not to repeat the dose, please call your health-care team for directions.
- Usually a 'breakthrough' medication is also prescribed for you to take if you experience pain between your scheduled Methadone doses. This is either a smaller dose of Methadone or a different 'fast-acting' pain medication. Keep track of all the breakthrough medication doses you use by writing down the type and amount of medication, date, and time.



## What are the side effects of taking Methadone?

- Methadone can make you **sleepy**. This is more common during the first few days after Methadone is started or after your dose is increased. This usually improves after your body gets used to the medication. While taking Methadone you should:
  - **Avoid drinking alcohol.**
  - **Avoid driving a vehicle or operating equipment/heavy machinery until a stable dose is reached or at any time that you feel drowsy or sleepy.**
- Like other similar medications, Methadone may upset your stomach or cause constipation. Report these side effects to your health-care team so they can address these problems.
- Methadone may make you **itchy**. This is usually not due to an allergic reaction but if you also have a rash, swelling or difficulty breathing, stop taking your Methadone and seek medical attention immediately.

## How do I store Methadone?

- Store Methadone at room temperature and away from extreme heat and moisture.
- Methadone is a strong medication that can harm children or adults who are not prescribed this medication. You must store your Methadone in a safe place. Consider buying an inexpensive lockable case to store your medications. For example, some people use a small fishing tackle box.
- Extra medications you are no longer using should be returned to a pharmacy for disposal.

### Special Instructions: