Methadone for Opioid Use Disorder:
Your Questions Answered

METHADONE

Seeking help for your opioid dependence is a wise and important step in your road to recovery. There are people who can help you to develop goals and who can support you along the way. Talk to your health care provider about your support options.

Methadone is an opioid used to treat opioid use disorder. Unlike most opioids, methadone lasts a long time in your body to help prevent cravings and feelings of withdrawal. Once you've taken this medication for a while, you should feel more energetic and clear-headed. This will let you focus on things like work, school, and family.

1. Changes?

You've been prescribed methadone for opioid use disorder (opioid dependence). You'll take the first dose of methadone in the presence of a health care provider. The first dose will be small to see how you tolerate it. The dose can be increased based on how you feel. It may take weeks to get to the dose that is right for you.

2. Continue?

You and your health care provider will decide how long you'll take methadone. Usually, long-term treatment is most effective (e.g., months to years). You may decide to try stopping this medication at some point. It's important to do this together with your health care provider so the dose can be lowered very slowly.

3. Proper Use?

Methadone is a liquid medication. It's mixed with juice by a pharmacist and given to you to drink at the pharmacy. When starting methadone, you will have to go to the pharmacy every day to take your dose. Over time many people can take doses at home – these are called "carries". Talk with your health care provider about how to manage missed doses, as changes to your medication may be needed. Overdose can happen with methadone when it's not taken properly. Do not take other opioids, alcohol, or sleeping pills (e.g., benzodiazepines like lorazepam [Ativan]) while on this medication, as they increase the risk of an overdose. It may not be safe to drive a car or operate machinery when you first start taking this medication.

4. Monitor?

You may experience side effects, especially when you start methadone or increase the dose. You may feel light-headed, dizzy, drowsy, and sweaty. You may be constipated. You might also feel sick to your stomach and vomit. These side effects may go away as your body gets used to the medication but if they do not, talk with your health care provider. Contact a health care provider right away if you have a hard time breathing or staying awake, are experiencing severe dizziness or chest pain, or if you feel a rapid or irregular heartbeat.

5. Follow-up?

When you start methadone, you'll have extra visits with your health care provider. Your health care provider will want to see how you're feeling and may change your dose if needed. You'll also need to provide urine samples when asked by your health care provider.

It is important to:

Store methadone carries in a locked box in the refrigerator. Keep it out of sight and reach of children and pets. A small amount of this medication can kill a child.

Never share your methadone with anyone. Your dose is tailored to you and can be dangerous or even deadly for someone else.

Talk to your health care provider or pharmacist about Take Home Naloxone kits and overdose response training.

Take all unused and expired medications back to the pharmacy for safe disposal.
For locations that accept returns: ☎ 1-844-535-8889 🔗 healthsteward.ca

Did you know?

There are many medications that are not safe to take while on methadone therapy. Tell your health care providers about all street drugs, vitamins, and other medicines that you're taking, and talk with them before starting anything new. This includes natural medicines, herbal products, and supplements.

Questions and Notes:

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