

METHOTREXATE PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS

I want you to read this concerning your therapy with methotrexate, a potent medicine which can be very effective in treating psoriasis and many other skin problems.

There is usually substantial improvement within 12-16 weeks but it can be much faster. Methotrexate, like all other medications, can have side effects. Most side effects can be detected before they become a problem, and for that reason I will keep you under close supervision, arranging regular visits and laboratory tests.

HOW TO TAKE METHOTREXATE

Methotrexate is given once weekly, rather than daily. This is different from most medications. The importance of this weekly schedule cannot be overemphasized. The once weekly dose is taken as a single dose, usually between 4-6 pills taken all together. Taking methotrexate more often or changing the dose schedule in any way can result in significant side effects.

It is my recommendation that methotrexate is always taken with folic acid. This is a vitamin which makes methotrexate safer. The folic acid is taken at a 1 mg dose every day.

Other medications you are taking may result in an increase in side effects or a decrease in the effectiveness of methotrexate. Tell me all the medicines you are taking, whether they are prescription or nonprescription medicines. The two medications of main concern are high dose aspirin and sulfa based antibiotics. Methotrexate can be taken with non steroidal anti-inflammatory agents such as ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or naproxen (Aleve) for joint pain

INFORMATION ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS

The most common side effects of methotrexate are loss of appetite, nausea (but rarely vomiting), diarrhea, abnormal liver test results (the periodic blood tests will check for this). These side effects do not occur for most patients and the folic acid vitamin usually will prevent them. If they develop they are usually temporary. If these or other problems develop, notify me promptly.

Methotrexate is known to cause birth defects. Pregnant or nursing women must not take methotrexate.

A side effect of long-term therapy (usually requiring many years of therapy) may be the development of scarring (fibrosis or cirrhosis) in the liver. This is more likely in patients who drink alcohol regularly. Rarely it may be necessary to take a small specimen of liver tissue with a needle (liver biopsy) to determine whether scarring is present.

SUMMARY

- 1) Follow your instructions faithfully.
- 2) Take your methotrexate dose on the same day of each week. Take folic acid once per day
- 3) If any side effects develop, notify me before the next dose of methotrexate.
- 4) Notify your other doctors about taking methotrexate before starting other medications especially sulfa antibiotics
- 5) Avoid alcoholic beverages.
- 6) Obtain the laboratory tests ordered usually done at the time of your visits.