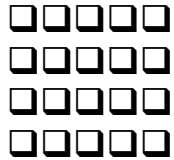
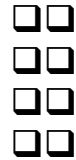


Patient Information Leaflet



METHADONE FOR PAIN



The name of the treatment you have been prescribed is methadone

What is methadone used for?

Methadone is a strong painkiller used to help to relieve severe pain. It may be particularly helpful in pain that is caused by nerve damage.

How should I take it?

When you first start on methadone the doctor needs to find the correct dose to help your pain. In order to do this for the first 7-10 days you will be allowed to have a dose of methadone as often as every 3 hours if needed to help the pain. It may take 24-48 hours before you notice any significant improvement in your pain. After 7-10 days you will be converted to having the methadone regularly between one and four times a day. This same dose will be continued for as long as it continues to help the pain. If you start to get more pain, tell your doctor.

How is methadone supplied?

Methadone is usually supplied as an oral liquid. Depending upon the dose prescribed it may be possible for you to be supplied with tablets (5mg strength) if you speak to your doctor.

If you have difficulty swallowing or if the doctors are finding it difficult to control your pain they may decide to give you methadone using a "syringe driver". This is an infusion (or drip) that runs continually under the skin. If you go home on a syringe driver a district nurse will need to visit your home to change the infusion every 24 hours.

Does methadone have any side effects?

Most strong painkillers have similar side effects. The commonest side effect is constipation and your doctor will usually prescribe you a laxative to stop this from happening.

Methadone can also make you feel sick or be sick (vomit). If this happens tell your doctor so that he/she can prescribe an anti-sickness tablet for you. Methadone can also make you more sleepy than normal, or make it difficult for you to concentrate. This may affect your ability to drive or operate machinery. Both these side effects are more common when you first start treatment or if the dose is increased, and usually improve within about 10 days.

Can I take any other medicines?

Certain medicines can affect the dose of methadone you need. Any doctor prescribing a new medicine for you should check that it can be taken with your usual medication. If you are going to buy any over the counter medicines from a community pharmacist always tell the pharmacist what medicines you are already taking.

Can I drink alcohol whilst taking methadone?

You can drink alcohol in moderation, but it may make you feel more drowsy. Remember that this will affect your ability to drive or operate machinery.

How long will I have to take methadone for?

You can continue to take methadone for as long as it helps your pain and you are not having any serious side effects. It may be necessary for your doctor to change the dose during your treatment. Always tell your doctor if your pain is not controlled.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

Take as soon as you remember. If it is already time to take your next dose only take one dose, never double up

Methadone does not currently hold a product license for treatment of pain.

What is a product license?

A government department, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), issues product licenses. In order to obtain a license, the manufacturer or importer of a medicine provides evidence to the MHRA to show that the medicine works for the illness to be treated, does not have too many side effects and is made to a high standard. Obtaining a license takes a long time and can be very expensive.

Methadone does not have a product license for the treatment of pain because the manufacturer has not yet applied for one. It is however licensed for other uses. At the present time there are a number of reports in the medical journals of people using methadone for pain, and so far it has been shown to be safe and effective.

Doctors may prescribe medicines that do not have a product license. Your doctor is aware that methadone does hold a product license for this use but feels that it may be of help to you.

How do I obtain further supplies?

Methadone will usually be supplied by the hospital pharmacy. If you think you will run out of medication before your next Consultant appointment please contact the Consultant's secretary **before** you run out so that a new prescription can be written.

Who can I contact for further information?

For more information on the use of methadone for the treatment of pain contact the doctor responsible for this treatment or speak to a pharmacist at York Hospital.

**This information is available in other formats on request.
Please telephone us on 01904 725796 if you require
it in large print, Braille or on audiotape.**

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