

Prescribing tip for actioning by Practice

MHRA Drug Safety Update Methotrexate – New measures to reduce risk of fatal overdose

In autoimmune conditions and some cancer therapies methotrexate should be taken once a week. Despite regular reminders being issued, the MHRA continue to receive reports of inadvertent overdose due to more frequent dosing (including daily administration). **New measures have been implemented to prompt healthcare professionals to record the day of the week for intake and to remind patients of the dosing schedule and the risks of overdose.**

Advice for prescribers:

- Before prescribing methotrexate, make sure that the patient can understand and comply with **once-weekly** dosing.
- Local recommendation has always been to prescribe methotrexate using the 2.5mg strength tablets. **DO NOT prescribe the 10mg tablets.** For example:

2.5mg (**ONE** x 2.5mg tablet) to be taken **ONCE A WEEK** on **xxxxDAY** (specify day the week)
10mg (**FOUR** x 2.5mg tablets) to be taken **ONCE A WEEK** on **xxxxDAY** (specify day of the week)

- **Decide with the patient which day of the week they will take their methotrexate and note this day down in full on the prescription.** (Dispensing pharmacies should then ensure that this information is communicated on the final dispensed product).
- Inform the patient and their caregivers of the potentially fatal risk of accidental overdose if methotrexate is taken more frequently than once a week; **specifically, that it should NOT be taken daily.**

Since July 2020, all oral methotrexate products with indications requiring once-weekly dosing now come with a [patient card](#). The card will prompt patients to take methotrexate once a week, record the day of the week on which to take their methotrexate medication and help patients to identify the signs and symptoms of overdose.

Patients should be instructed to carry the card with them in their purse or wallet and to use it to alert any healthcare professionals they consult who are not familiar with their methotrexate treatment about their once-weekly dosing schedule (for example, on hospital admission, change of care).

Educational materials for healthcare professionals can also be found [here](#).

Report on a Yellow Card

Suspected adverse reactions and any medication error that results in patient harm should be reported to the MHRA through the Yellow Card scheme.

You can report suspected side effects electronically via:

- the [Yellow Card website](#)
- the free Yellow Card app; download now from the [Apple App Store](#) or [PlayStore](#)
- EMIS clinical IT systems (for healthcare professionals)