New Zealand Formulary
PATIENT INFORMATION

# METHADONE

*meth-ah-dohn*

## What does it do?

*Methadone* is used to relieve strong pain and sometimes for other conditions.

## Before you start

- Tell your doctor if you have bowel or kidney problems, sleep apnoea, if you have ever had a seizure, or have had a recent head injury.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.
- Your doctor may do a heart test (ECG) before you start and while you are taking *methadone*.

## How should you take it?

Take *methadone* regularly as directed. You can take it with or without food.
Tablet: Take with a glass of water.
Liquid: Measure carefully with an oral syringe or measuring spoon.

## What if you forget a dose?

If it is nearly time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the usual time. Otherwise, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. Do not take two doses at the same time.

## Can you take other medicines?

Some medicines available without a prescription may react with *methadone* including:

- sedating antihistamines (e.g. Phenergan®)
- cough suppressants (e.g. Duro-Tuss®, Benadryl Dry Forte®)
- Ural® sachets or Sodibic® capsules
- some migraine medicines, such as sumatriptan (e.g. Sumagran Active®)

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products (e.g. St John's wort) or recreational drugs.

## What side effects might you notice?

| Side Effects | Recommended action |
|---|---|
| Slow or shallow breathing, hard to wake up<br>Seizures<br>Fainting | Tell your doctor immediately |
| Confusion, mood changes<br>Seeing, hearing or feeling things that aren't really there<br>Tummy pain (new or getting worse) | Tell your doctor |
| Constipation | Take your prescribed laxatives. Tell your doctor |
| Drowsiness, dizziness<br>Nausea, vomiting, dry mouth or throat<br>Itching, flushing, sweating<br>Strange or uncontrolled movements | Tell your doctor if troublesome |

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

## Other information:

- If *methadone* is not relieving your pain contact your health professional – your dose may need changing.
- *Methadone* can impair your ability to do tasks such as driving or using machines. Alcohol makes this worse. Discuss your risk with your health professional. (search NZTA - Are you safe to drive?)
- *Methadone* may be addictive with long-term use.
- Long-term use of *methadone* may cause side effects such as less interest or trouble having sex, changes in periods, or weak bones. It may also make some types of pain worse. Discuss with your doctor.
- If you have been taking *methadone* regularly for a long time, talk to your doctor before stopping.