

Taking Methadone Safely

What is methadone?

Methadone has been used for decades to treat pain. It is also used to treat opioid use disorder. When taken as prescribed, it is safe and effective.

It is important to take Methadone exactly as your doctor ordered to avoid a potentially lethal build up in the body.

What are the guidelines for taking methadone safely?

- **Do not** stop taking this medication abruptly.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about the plan for monitoring therapy and adjusting doses. Methadone medication is specifically tailored for the individual patient and doses are often adjusted and readjusted.
- Do not drink alcohol while taking this medication.
- Avoid activities requiring mental alertness or coordination until you know how methadone affects you.
- **Never** share this medication with anyone as this is a felony.

What are the side effects?

Less serious side effects of methadone include:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Sweating
- Lightheadedness
- Fatigue (tiredness)

Serious side effects include:

- Severe constipation
- Extreme dizziness

Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee

- Fainting
- Unusually low blood pressure
- Seizures

Call your doctor if you have any of these serious side effects.

What are the potential risks?

It is important to be aware of the risks because methadone remains in the body for a long time, even after its effects wear off.

The risks are:

- slowing or stopping of your breathing
- slow or uneven heartbeat
- death

Other medications may interact with methadone and cause heart conditions. It is important that you **tell your other healthcare providers, including your retail pharmacist, that you are on methadone.**

Where will I store methadone?

Store methadone in a safe place, such as a locked cabinet or box, to safeguard it against theft and to prevent children from accidentally taking methadone.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Scott Ciarkowski, PharmD, MBA.
 Reviewer: Jillian DiClemente, PharmD
 Plain Language Reviewer: Ruti Volk, MSI., AHIP.

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 08/2021