

# Methotrexate

- Keep this leaflet safe, as you may need to refer to it again.
- Please ask your vet or veterinary nurse if you have any further questions.
- This medicine has been prescribed for your pet ONLY. Do not take it yourself or give it to another person or any other animal; it may harm them even if their symptoms appear to be the same.

The medicine you have been given for your dog or cat is called methotrexate. It may have a trade name such as Matrex<sup>®</sup>, but often will just be called methotrexate.

## What is methotrexate?

Methotrexate belongs to a group of medicines called antimetabolites, which are a type of cytotoxic drug. Cytotoxic drugs have both anti-cancer activity and the potential to damage normal tissue; their use is sometimes referred to as 'chemotherapy'. They may be used to help manage/treat cancer. Cytotoxic drugs are often used in combination with several other drugs and may be used alongside radiotherapy or surgery to treat cancer.

## Why has my pet been prescribed methotrexate?

Methotrexate is sometimes used in veterinary patients to treat lymphoma. This is a type of cancer affecting lymphoid tissue, which includes lymph nodes (small glands around the body), the spleen and bone marrow. In rare instances methotrexate may be used to treat rheumatoid arthritis, atopic dermatitis or similar conditions where the body is attacked by its own immune system.

## How should I store methotrexate?

This medicine does not require special storage conditions. The bottle or box should be clearly labelled as containing cytotoxic medication (e.g. with cytotoxic warning tape). For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children and in a childproof container.**

## How do I give methotrexate tablets to my pet?

**Disposable gloves should be worn at all times when handling and administering this drug. DO NOT split or crush these tablets; only use whole ones.** Disguise the tablets in small quantities of a strongly flavoured food that your pet likes. Pregnant or breastfeeding women, children, the elderly and immunosuppressed individuals should not handle chemotherapy drugs. If you are unsure, please discuss this with your vet. **Faeces, urine and saliva from dogs and cats taking methotrexate can contain small traces of the drug. Therefore, do not allow your pet to lick your skin (including your hands and face) and make sure they go to the toilet well away from other pets and from people. Wear disposable gloves when picking up faeces in bags. Dispose of faeces in domestic waste. Dogs should be walked in quiet areas. Do not allow them to soil areas where children will be playing or where there is a high dog population. Use a bottle of water to dilute down any urine passed on solid surfaces (e.g. pavements or concrete).**

## How long will my pet need to take methotrexate?

Your vet will advise you on the length of time for which you will need to give this medicine. This may vary between patients. Unused tablets and empty containers should be returned to your veterinary practice for safe disposal.

## What should I do if I run out of tablets?

Try not to run out of tablets. Make sure you order more tablets from your vet if your supply is getting low. If you do run out, contact your own vet for further advice and restart the course as soon as possible.

## What should I do if I miss a dose?

If a dose is missed, give the medication as soon as possible. However, it is best to skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your pet's next scheduled dose. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the total stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

## What should I do if my pet is accidentally given too many doses?

**Contact your vet immediately** if your pet receives an overdose of methotrexate.

## Can my pet take methotrexate if I am already giving them other drugs?

Tell your vet if you are giving your pet any other medications, even if you think they already know. This includes herbal or off-the-shelf remedies from a pet shop or pharmacy. Do not give your pet methotrexate if they are already taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs; used to provide pain relief, particularly in arthritis), phenytoin (used to control epilepsy), certain antibiotics, folic acid (a vitamin supplement), hydrocortisone or methylprednisolone (both corticosteroids), or vincristine (another cytotoxic drug).

## What are the possible side effects of methotrexate for my pet?

There is limited information about the potential side effects of methotrexate in dogs and cats. However, in people it can cause abdominal pain, loss of appetite, vomiting and diarrhoea, and mouth

## The Prescribing Cascade

This medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is used by vets under the 'prescribing cascade'. The medicine is not authorized by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for use in dogs/cats/pets. Your vet can explain the 'prescribing cascade' in further detail to you and also explain why they are prescribing this drug for your pet. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you understand the reasons that the drug is being prescribed and its possible complications, before the treatment is issued.

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and stomach ulcers. Very rare side effects in people include liver, lung or kidney damage, low blood pressure, heart problems and skin reactions. Methotrexate can suppress production of blood cells by the bone marrow. Your pet will require regular blood tests whilst taking methotrexate to monitor blood cell levels and to check for other side effects. If your pet shows *any* unusual symptoms whilst taking this medication, please contact your vet.

### **What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking methotrexate?**

If your pet is unwell while receiving medication, you should not give any further doses and should contact your vet as soon as possible for advice.

### **What should I do if a person accidentally takes this drug?**

If a person accidentally takes your pet's tablets, the person should be taken to the local hospital **immediately**. Take this leaflet and any remaining tablets plus their container (even if it is empty) with you.

### **Whom do I contact if I want to know more?**

If you have any questions about this drug or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about methotrexate.