

Read this important information before taking:

# Oral Methadone

**Take extra care! Oral methadone is a high-alert medicine.**

**This means that oral methadone has been proven to be safe and effective, but it can cause serious harm, even death, if not taken exactly as directed.**

## When Your Doctor Prescribes Oral Methadone



**Tell**

- 1 Tell your doctor about all your diseases and conditions.** Methadone may not be right for you if you have certain medical conditions, such as heart, lung, kidney, liver, or stomach problems.
- 2 Tell the doctor what else you take.** Many medicines taken with methadone can increase the risk of bad side effects, such as trouble breathing that can lead to death. Provide your doctor with a list of all the prescription, over-the-counter, and herbal medicines, vitamins, and other dietary supplements you take. Also tell your doctor (and pharmacist) how much alcohol you drink and if you are taking any street drugs. While taking methadone, tell your doctor if you start or stop any medicines, herbals, or dietary supplements.
- 3 Ask your doctor about medicine for an overdose.** You should have a medicine called naloxone on hand in case you accidentally take too much methadone. Make sure you know how to use it, and teach your family about the signs of an overdose and how to give you a dose of naloxone if needed. See the back of this page for details.



**Save a Life**

## When Filling Your Prescription



- 4 Know your dose and how to measure it.** Methadone comes in a tablet or liquid. The oral liquid comes in more than one strength (i.e., 5 mg per 5 mL, 10 mg per 5 mL, 50 mg per 5 mL). Before you leave the pharmacy or clinic, check that your methadone is the same strength as your doctor prescribed. If the pharmacy does not give you an oral syringe or dosing cup to measure each liquid dose, ask for one. **NEVER** use a household teaspoon or tablespoon to measure a dose. Check that you know how to measure the amount you are supposed to take by showing the pharmacist or healthcare provider how you will do it.

## When Taking Oral Methadone



- 5 Take exactly as directed.** Take methadone at the same time each day. Do **NOT** take extra doses. Taking too much medicine can kill you because it can slow or stop your breathing. Do not stop taking this medicine suddenly because it can cause withdrawal symptoms.
- 6 If you miss a dose.** If you take methadone for an opioid addiction and forget to take a dose, skip the missed dose and take your next scheduled dose the following day. If you take methadone for pain and forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember, and take your next dose 8 or 12 hours later as prescribed. Continue on this new schedule. Do not take two doses at the same time. If you forget to take methadone for several days, call your doctor because your dose may need to be lowered, then slowly increased again.



**Do Not Share**

- 7 Do not share.** Methadone must **NEVER** be shared with others. Methadone works differently in different people. A safe dose for one person may be harmful, even deadly, to another person.



- 8 Take precautions.** You may feel sleepy while taking this medicine. Do not drive until you know how this medicine affects you, and be cautious when climbing stairs. Do not drink alcohol or take street drugs while taking methadone. Also tell your other doctors, dentists, and pharmacists that you are taking methadone.

## When You Should Call Your Doctor



- 9 Call immediately** if you have chest pain, an irregular or pounding heartbeat, signs of an overdose, withdrawal symptoms, or an allergic reaction. Signs of an overdose are listed on the back of this page. Signs of withdrawal include sweating, runny nose, flu-like symptoms, stomach pain, trouble sleeping, large pupils, irritability, and excessive yawning. Signs of an allergic reaction include a skin rash or hives, trouble breathing, wheezing, chest tightness, and a swollen face or tongue. If you can't reach your doctor right away, seek immediate treatment in an emergency room.



**Call**

- 10 Also call immediately** if your pain is not relieved or you have persistent dizziness or a headache, confusion, weakness, hallucinations, trembling, excessive sweating, very bad diarrhea, flushing, vision changes, vomiting, muscle pain or cramps, difficulty urinating, or if you sustain a head injury.

For more information to help keep you safe, visit: [www.consumermedsafety.org](http://www.consumermedsafety.org).

## Get Medical Treatment **Immediately** for Signs of an Overdose

### **NALOXONE SAVES LIVES!**



#### Signs of an **overdose**

- Extreme sleepiness
- Loss of consciousness
- Awake but unable to talk
- Slow or shallow breathing
- Uneven or stopped breathing
- Choking sounds
- Snore-like gurgling sounds
- Vomiting
- Limp body or muscle twitches
- Cold, clammy skin
- Bluish lips or nails

#### If you witness someone **overdosing** on methadone

- 1 **Call 911** right away! This is an emergency. Call for help immediately.
- 2 **Turn the person on their side** with knees slightly bent to keep the airway clear and prevent choking if they vomit. Do **NOT** put the person in a cold shower, slap or drag them around to wake them up, or try to get them to vomit.
- 3 **Give naloxone if available.** Naloxone comes in a nasal spray (Narcan) or a shot (Evzio) that anyone can give through clothing. Naloxone immediately reverses a methadone overdose and helps the person breathe normally again. Most people respond to naloxone in a few minutes, but you may need to do rescue breathing and give a second dose before emergency personnel arrive to take the person to the hospital. You can get naloxone at your pharmacy, in some states without a prescription. Insurance often covers naloxone.

Topics	Fast Facts
<b>Generic name</b>	■ methadone (pronounced METH-a-done)
<b>Common brand names</b>	■ Dolophine, Methadone HCl Intensol, Methadose (generic available)
<b>Common uses</b>	■ Pain so severe that long-term, around-the-clock relief is needed, and no other pain medicines have worked ■ Opioid addiction treatment
<b>Usual dose: Start low and go slow</b>	■ Methadone builds up in the body over time and could result in an overdose, especially if your dose is too high at the start or is increased too quickly ■ To prevent an overdose, your doctor will start you on a low dose, check with you to see if the medicine is working or if you have side effects, and then increase your dose every 3 to 7 days if necessary ■ Your starting dose will depend on whether or not you were previously taking high doses of opioid medicines
<b>Possible drug dependence with long-term use</b>	■ Methadone is an opioid that causes an exaggerated feeling of well-being and an intense feeling of happiness; this can lead to physical, mental, and emotional dependence on the drug with long-term use
<b>Safety during pregnancy/ breastfeeding</b>	■ Speak with your healthcare provider if you are, or plan to become, pregnant ■ If you get pregnant while taking methadone, call your doctor right away; you and your doctor can decide if you should continue taking methadone or if you should develop a plan to safely stop methadone ■ Methadone is passed to your baby through breast milk ■ Tell your doctor and your baby's doctor if you are breastfeeding while taking methadone ■ Call 911 if your baby has difficulty breathing or is limp; let your baby's doctor know about other changes such as an increase in your baby's sleepiness or change in feeding patterns
<b>Special precaution</b>	■ If the person taking methadone is making unfamiliar sounds while sleeping, try waking him or her up; note that loved ones have thought the person was just snoring, when in fact the person had overdosed
<b>Storage and disposal</b>	■ Store at room temperature away from direct light ■ Flush any unused methadone down the toilet, or take it to a drug take-back center; ask your pharmacist for the location of a take-back center near you (note: most other medicines should not be flushed) ■ Keep methadone in a safe locked location, out of the reach of children ■ Keep beverages that have been mixed with methadone out of the reach of children
<b>Other conditions to report to your doctor</b>	■ Continually feeling sick to your stomach, difficulty sleeping, sexual problems, or weight gain ■ Constipation: Exercising, eating fiber, and drinking water can help, but you may need to ask your doctor to order a laxative; let your doctor know if constipation seems worse or does not respond to laxatives
<b>Do NOT take this food or herbal</b>	■ When taking methadone, avoid grapefruit, grapefruit juice, and St. John's wort
<b>Prescription medicines that should NOT be taken UNLESS prescribed or approved by the same doctor who prescribes your methadone</b>	■ Certain antibiotics or antifungals (e.g., ciprofloxacin, fluconazole, clarithromycin, linezolid, ketoconazole) ■ Certain antipsychotics or antidepressants (e.g., quetiapine, fluoxetine, amitriptyline, sertraline) ■ Benzodiazepines (e.g., alprazolam [Xanax], diazepam [Valium], lorazepam [Ativan]) ■ Certain medicines that make you sleepy, including antihistamines, sedatives, tranquilizers, sleep medicines, and other strong pain medicines ■ Certain medicines used to treat Parkinson's disease
<b>Special tests your doctor may prescribe</b>	■ Methadone can cause a life-threatening heart rhythm condition that can lead to fast, irregular heartbeats ■ Your doctor may order an electrocardiogram (ECG) heart test before you start taking methadone and sometimes while you are taking it, especially if you have risk factors for a heart rhythm problem