Caring for Your Child
Methotrexate for the Rheumatology Patient

Why does my child need this medicine?
Methotrexate is a treatment for Juvenile arthritis and other rheumatologic conditions such as dermatomyositis, lupus, psoriasis and uveitis.

How does this medicine work?
Methotrexate reduces the inflammation, pain and stiffness caused by Juvenile Arthritis. It also reduces inflammation in the eyes.

How is this medicine given?
It may be given as an injection under the skin or by mouth. Your healthcare provider will discuss which option is best for your child.

What are the side effects of this medicine?
- Being more tired than usual
- Upset stomach
- Irritation to the liver
- May decrease blood counts
- May increase risk of infection

Folic acid may help reduce the side effects. Your provider may ask you to give your child a multivitamin with 400 mcg of folic acid. If the multivitamin does not reduce the side effects, your provider may give you a prescription for folic acid.

When should I call my child’s healthcare provider?
Call if your child has any of the following symptoms:
- Temperature over 101 degrees Fahrenheit
- Severe nausea or vomiting
- Severe diarrhea
- Unusual bruising or bleeding
- Yellow coloring of the skin or eyes
- Rash

Also call if you have any questions or concerns. The clinic number is 215-590-2547.

If your child has signs of a life-threatening reaction, call 911.
Are there any special instructions about taking this medicine?

- Do not take this medicine with food. Take one hour before or 2 hours after eating food.
- It is usually only given once a week.
- Do not give methotrexate if your child has a fever.
- Your child will need to have his blood tested regularly to check for medication toxicity. We cannot refill your child’s methotrexate prescription unless his blood tests are up to date. This is a common schedule for blood testing:
  - One month (or 4 doses) after starting the medicine
  - If results are normal, test again every 3 to 4 months.
- When your child is due to have medication toxicity labs done, they should be drawn 5 days after the weekly injection
- Wear gloves when handling this medicine.
- Wash your hands after handling your child’s diapers or urine.
- Wash your hands after handling this medicine.
- If your child has a fever, call your Rheumatology doctor. He may ask you to stop giving the methotrexate until the fever is gone. You should also take your child to the pediatrician if he has a fever.
- Let your pediatrician know that your child is taking methotrexate. Live vaccines should not be given while your child is taking methotrexate. Live vaccines include: MMR, Varicella, and the nasal flu mist.
- Call your Rheumatology doctor if your child has been exposed to any diseases such as chicken pox, shingles, etc.
- Some antibiotics cannot be taken with methotrexate. Check with your Rheumatology doctor before giving your child any antibiotics.
- Patients should not drink alcohol while taking methotrexate.
- Methotrexate can harm an unborn baby. Patients should not get pregnant while taking methotrexate. If a woman is pregnant or breastfeeding, she cannot handle or administer the methotrexate.
- The medicine should be stored in a dark, cool, dry place. Room temperature is fine. Do not store it in the bathroom.
- Keep this medicine away from other children and animals.
- Contact your local refuse department to learn the rules for needle/syringe disposal in your area. We cannot accept used syringes in our office. More information about this can also be found at www.safeneedledisposal.org