

Other notes about taking methadone

- You are more likely to succeed in staying off heroin if you have additional support and counselling, for example, community groups like NA, and support from family, friends and other people close to you.
- Every so often during your treatment, you will be asked to provide a urine sample.
- You should refrain from drinking alcohol or using drugs during your treatment.
- You should inform the DVLA if you drive and you are taking methadone.
- All drugs must be kept out of reach of children and animals. Please ask your worker for a lockable box to store your medication (free of charge). Children should never be given your medication. They have no tolerance and it could kill them. Always call 999 if you think a child has swallowed your medication. Talk to your Health Visitor or GP if your child has difficulty sleeping or being soothed.
- Speak to your recovery worker or doctor if you experience side effects or symptoms and wish to stop treatment.
- Read the information leaflet which will be given with your medication.



About Change Grow Live

Change Grow Live is a social care and health charity that works with individuals who want to change their lives for the better and achieve positive and life-affirming goals.

Find out more

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Your Questions Answered

Methadone

www.changegrowlive.org



What is methadone?

Methadone is a medication used in treatment to help you manage any withdrawal symptoms you may experience when trying to stop using opiates.

If you are dependent on opioids you will develop withdrawal symptoms when you stop taking them and require regular use of an opioid to feel 'normal'.



Our mission is to help people change the direction of their lives, grow as a person and live life to its full potential.

What is Methadone? Continued

Withdrawal symptoms may include: sweating; feeling hot and cold; runny eyes and nose; yawning; being off food; stomach cramps; feeling sick or vomiting; diarrhoea; tremors; poor sleep; restlessness; general aches and pains; and just feeling awful. Withdrawal symptoms tend to ease within 5 days, however you may experience cravings for opioids, tiredness and poor quality sleep for a while afterwards.

Methadone is itself an opioid, which is used as a replacement for heroin or other opioids on which you are dependent, to reduce cravings and limit withdrawal symptoms. Opioid substitutes such as methadone are used to help you withdraw from opioid use over a period of time.

Who prescribes methadone and when?

You will be offered a full health and wellbeing assessment with a recovery worker and a prescribing member of the clinical team. Following this assessment you may be prescribed methadone. If you have ever injected drugs we will support you to have a liver test, blood-borne virus screening and vaccinations as appropriate. We will also support you into any specialist treatment you may need.



Taking methadone

Following your assessment you will see a prescriber and your recovery worker. The consultation will help us understand the most appropriate treatment and initial dose. The aim is to prevent withdrawal symptoms.

We prescribe within safe clinical guidelines to prevent overdose, therefore your prescriber will prescribe a relatively low dose initially and will see you regularly to adjust as needed.

Methadone is usually prescribed as a once a day dose of oral liquid. For at least the first four weeks of treatment, you will be required to take your daily dose under the supervision of the pharmacist who dispenses the methadone to you. This means there can be no doubt about how much methadone you are taking in each dose. You should aim to take it at around the same time every day.

How long will it take to work?

The initial dose is usually gradually increased to a stable dose. Methadone starts to work in half an hour, and takes 2-4 hours to reach its peak effect once you have taken it. It builds up in the body so you will feel greater effect from the same dose over a few days. It can take up to several weeks to find the correct dose which prevents all withdrawal symptoms. The correct dose varies person to person depending on how much heroin you were using and how your body processes the methadone.

Maintenance and coming off Methadone (detox)

Once settled on a regular stable dose of methadone, your recovery worker will talk with you about the aims of your treatment, including how to reduce the dose and eventually come off treatment with methadone. This is known as detoxification (detox). The rates of reduction will be reviewed every 6 weeks and agreed with your prescriber.

