

Methadone *(say meh-thud-own)*

What is methadone?

Methadone is long-acting opioid medicine. We use it to treat opioid use disorder.

Some signs of opioid use disorder:

- cravings for opioids
- using more opioids than intended
- continuing to use opioids even though it causes issues in your personal or work life
- spending lots of time thinking about getting and using opioids

My goal is to:

- Completely stop using opioids.
- Reduce my cravings for opioids.
- Reduce my use of non-prescription opioids.
- Use opioids in a safe way.
- _____

How does methadone work?

Methadone is a long-acting medicine. This means the effects of the medicine last in your body for 24 hours.

Methadone works on the same parts of the brain as other opioids like fentanyl, heroin, morphine, and oxycodone. It reduces cravings and prevents withdrawal.

Methadone can help in these ways:

- **Reduce** cravings for opioids.
- **Reduce** use of non-prescribed opioids.
- **Reduce** symptoms of opioid withdrawal.

Do I have to pay for this medicine?

PharmaCare covers the cost of methadone (Methadose and Metadol-D) for all residents of British Columbia.

Please talk to your prescriber or pharmacist if you have questions about this.

How do I take methadone?

- You take it one time each day. It comes as a liquid that you swallow. This medicine does not work as well if you miss doses.
- Your prescriber will ask the pharmacist to watch you take the medicine every day.
- Try to take the medicine **at the same time every day**. To help you remember, use a reminder alert or alarm.
- Your prescriber might start you with a low dose and increase it regularly until you reach a dose that works best for you.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose, try to take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, contact your pharmacist so you can return to your regular schedule.

If you miss 4 or more days of methadone in a row, your body's tolerance for the medicine might be affected. Your prescriber might need to reduce your dose.

What else should I know?

What if I use opioids? If you use other opioids while taking this medicine, you increase your chances of an opioid overdose compared to taking only methadone. Methadone does not block the effects of other opioids. Make sure you have, or someone around you has, a naloxone kit. Try not to use opioids alone.

What if I have opioid withdrawal or cravings while taking methadone? Call your prescriber right away.

What about taking other medicines? Always check with your prescriber or pharmacist before taking any new medicines, including medicines you get with or without a prescription, herbal medicines, and supplements.

Anything else? Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice. This fruit increases the effects of methadone.

What should I look out for?

Common Side Effects



1. Drowsy or dizzy

You might feel more tired and sleepy than usual. You might get dizzy or lightheaded when changing positions.

It is safest not to drive or use heavy machinery when drowsy.

Talk to your prescriber or pharmacist if this continues to bother you.



2. Sweating a lot

You might notice more sweating that is not related to heat or exercise.

Talk to your prescriber or pharmacist if this continues to bother you.



3. Stomach ache or constipation

Drink plenty of water.

Talk to your prescriber or pharmacist if this does not go away after 2 to 3 days.



4. Upset stomach

This should improve over time.

Talk to your pharmacist if you throw up right after taking the medicine. You might need to take an extra dose.

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Rare but Serious Side Effects

1. Irregular heartbeat

Methadone could cause your heart to skip beats, beat faster, or beat slower. Your prescriber might send you for a heart test called an electrocardiogram or ECG to check your heart. Contact your prescriber right away if you think your heart rate is affected by taking this medicine.

2. Serotonin syndrome

This can happen when there is too much of a brain chemical, called serotonin, in your body.

Early symptoms include feeling confused or agitated, muscle twitching, sweating, shivering, or diarrhea.

Serious symptoms include a very high fever, seizures, heart skipping beats, or blacking out.

Go to the nearest Emergency if you notice any early symptoms. **Call 911** if you have any serious symptoms.

When should I get help?

See your prescriber as soon as possible in these situations:

- You continue to crave opioids.
- You are bothered by any of the common side effects.
- You think your heart rate is affected by this medicine.
- You have any questions or concerns about this medicine or your opioid use.

If you do not have a prescriber, or they are not available, visit the closest **Rapid Access Addiction Clinic**:

Abbotsford	102-32463 Simon Avenue Phone: 604-851-3752
Chilliwack	45600 Menholm Road Phone: 604-703-6976
Mission	7298 Hurd Street Phone: 604-814-5625
New Westminster	330 East Columbia Street Phone: 604-520-4253
Surrey	13740 – 94A Avenue Phone: 604-587-3755 (Option 3)
Vancouver	2nd floor, 1081 Burrard Street Phone: 604-806-8867
Victoria	1119 Pembroke Street Phone: 250-591-3776

Call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Room if:

- You notice any symptoms of serotonin syndrome.
- You notice any of these signs of an allergic reaction: rash, hives, swelling of the face, tongue, or throat, trouble breathing.
- You use other opioids, and you feel like you are either very intoxicated or in bad withdrawal (dope sick).

It's good to ask questions

Anytime you have any questions or concerns about taking this medicine, talk with one of your healthcare team.

Call 811 (HealthLinkBC) after hours, and for any other health and medicine advice.

HealthLinkBC is open 24 hours a day and available in 130 languages. For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.