

METHADONE

e.g. daily doses, enough to control symptoms of condition

Indication: used to treat opioid addiction – usually under the clinical care of a drugs and alcohol service. It can also be used to treat pain.

Medicine Overview:

Methadone hydrochloride is generally used to treat opioid addiction. It is used as part of a programme of social and psychological treatment to help slowly withdraw the addicted opioid. Methadone works by occupying the opioid receptors so it can be used as a substitute for the addicted opioid. It reduces the urge to take any more of the addicted opioid, and can also help to reduce withdrawal symptoms and therefore allow addicts to change their behaviour. Methadone suppresses narcotic withdrawal for 24 to 36 hours.

Drug strategy 2010: services should focus on outcomes – and include prevention of blood borne viruses and improved mental and physical health/ wellbeing.

Health Risks/ Harm Reduction:

Harm to Children & Vulnerable Adults:

- Keep methadone away from children. 10mg (10ml) dose can kill a child. Children may mistake it for juice. Avoid putting in the fridge as easily accessed by children.
- Teach safe storage of medication at home and work. Apply child resistant lids / encourage washing of sticky lids to avoid poor closure / store in locked or inaccessible container – out of sight and reach of children. For disposal of empty bottles – rinse out & remove labels (for confidentiality) – encourage to return any unwanted meds to pharmacy for safe disposal. Recall is poor in these patients – prepare a printed sheet if needed.
- Assess overall risk of supplying MULTI dose container to patient. If not marked for daily dose dispensing and you have concerns for safety of patient or family members, contact the relevant prescriber.

Injecting:

- Viral and bacterial infection – due to poor injecting/ non-sterile equipment/ contaminated drugs.
- Blood borne viral infection e.g. HIV - risky sexual behaviour can aid spread – discuss use of condoms.
- Injection sites – can develop deep vein thrombosis over time – recommend adequate exercise.
- Immunisations up to date? Tetanus booster reminder. Hep B immunisation (knowledge of Hep C and HIV) – sign post to full screening service. Do you have leaflets to give? Contact GDAAT or Health Promotion Resources.
- Discuss safe disposal of ‘works’ – needle exchange service.

Use:

- Methadone is absorbed by the body in about 15 minutes, even if the effects are not felt for hours.
- Methadone works very slowly, there is no “rush” effect — it takes hours to get the full effect, but its other effects are similar to those of heroin and oxycodone. The effect can last up to 24 hours.
- If patient vomits dose more than 15 minutes after swallowing, advise not to take more methadone.
- Suddenly stopping taking methadone can cause withdrawal symptoms such as restlessness, teary eyes, runny nose, yawning, sweating, chills, muscle pain, and dilated pupils.
- If patient misses doses for 3 days in a row, refuse supply and refer back/call the doctor/clinic for instructions. They may need to restart methadone at a lower dose. Refer to SLA if providing enhanced service.
- Assess if client is willing and able to measure daily doses accurately. Encourage careful measurement of doses using metric spoon or measure - see side effects.
- Create a routine to avoid forgetting dose or attendance at pharmacy/ clinic review e.g. mobile phone reminders; post-it note/ highlighted reminder on bottle.

Side Effects:

- Constipation and sweating often persist

- May cause slowness/ impaired thinking
- Avoid over dosage – can slow breathing to critical levels (avoid during asthma attack)
- Overdose symptoms may include extreme drowsiness, pinpoint pupils, confusion, cold and clammy skin, weak pulse, shallow breathing, fainting, or breathing that stops
- If overdose is suspected medical help should be sought urgently so that an opiate blocker/ naloxone may be given. Check client knows what to do in emergencies – and family members.
- Less serious methadone side effects may include:
 - feeling anxious, nervous, or restless;
 - sleep problems (insomnia);
 - feeling weak or drowsy;
 - dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation, loss of appetite;
 - decreased sex drive, impotence, or difficulty having an orgasm.

Lifestyle Tips:

- Healthy diet – advise on regular meals with fresh fruit and veg and adequate protein to aid healing.
- Regular exercise – to keep immune system in good shape.
- Alcohol should be avoided during treatment as increases CNS depression, reduces the effect of methadone, and increases risk of mortality. Some clients may admit to drinking alcohol relying on a 48 hour clearance before being tested – 30% deaths occur unexpectedly with alcohol. Refer for help if relevant.
- Smoking cigarettes can reduce the effectiveness of methadone. If a smoker – encourage to quit via in-house Stop Smoking service or refer to NHS Stop Smoking service 08454 220040.
- Eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice reduces effectiveness of methadone.
- Methadone interacts with St. John's Wort (e.g. self- help taken for depression).
- Dental health – brush teeth/ take adequate water after dose – seek out NHS dentist for annual check -up. May be more at risk of gum disease.

Further reading, CPD & Signposting:

**** www.independencetrust.co.uk; Glos DAAT -Service User Support Team Tel: 01452 543546**

http://www.nta.nhs.uk/uploads/nta_best_practice_pharma_services_for_drug_users_pharmguide06.pdf; <http://www.harmreductionjournal.com/content/5/1/15>

NHS Stop Smoking service 08454 220040/ Quit Shop in Southgate St, Glos: 01452 385327

****April 2013 – check for latest update**

METHADONE KEY REVIEW QUESTIONS

WHY ARE YOU TAKING THIS: is used to treat opioid addiction	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Additional notes:</i>	
HOW DO YOU TAKE THIS: ➤ What is your current dose? When do you take it? How do you remember? <i>Discuss action, daily routine & 3 day rule. Name of key worker.</i> <i>Never take a double dose if forget a dose or if sick more than 15mins after taking.</i> ➤ How do you store your meds at home? <i>Check whether children or vulnerable adults living in the house.</i> <i>Go through Safe Storage and Risk Assessment if prescribed as MULTI-dose. Careful measurement of dose etc. Avoid children observing taking and storing routine.</i> ➤ How do you dispose of your empties? Are you still 'using'? Do you drink alcohol? <i>Safe disposal of all meds & works. Risk of accidental overdose with drugs and alcohol.</i> <i>Injection hygiene – Hep B vac? Refer where necessary.</i> ➤ Any concerns about your medicines?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Additional notes:</i>	
SIDE EFFECTS: Constipation and sweating common; impaired thinking Nausea/ vomiting/ diarrhoea; insomnia; restlessness Be aware signs of over dose – extreme drowsiness/ shallow breathing – see overleaf	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Additional notes:</i>	
OTHER DRUGS: □ Herbal remedies to avoid – St John's Wort □ Other opiates – risk of accidental overdose – seek medical help immediately	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Additional notes:</i>	
HEALTH TIPS: Healthy diet – fruit, veg, protein to heal. Avoid grapefruit. Increase water for bowel. Physical exercise – reduce thrombotic risk. Strengthen immune system. Dental hygiene – NHS check-up; rinse mouth with water after dose/ brush teeth. Avoid alcohol ! / Reduce alcohol to safe limits – avoid binge drinking – refer for help if necessary – highlight risk of death. Offer Stop Smoking advice/ service/ referral. Safe sex – condom use (free C-Card scheme if under 25yrs). Pass recorded BP/ weight/ BMI/ life style monitoring info to regular GP.	<input type="checkbox"/>

USEFUL PATIENT INFORMATION: Any leaflets/ magazine?

NHS Choices: <http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx>; **FRANK helpline number** (0808 77 66 00) for free, confidential advice; **Drugscope** www.drugscope.org.uk; **Stop Smoking:** <http://www.stopsmokingsupportglos.org.uk/>; **Glos DAAT -Service User Support Team** Tel: 01452 543546 (check for updated numbers post April 2013).